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GOD IN CHRIST JESUS

A STUDY OF ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

BY

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WITHDRAWN

TO

MY WIFE

WHO THROUGH MANY YEARS HAS PATIENTLY BORNE

THE BURDEN IMPOSED BY PARTNERSHIP

IN AN ARDUOUS LIFE

PREFACE

In adding another book to the many that have already been written on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, I feel bound to offer a few words of explanation and almost of apology. Many Commentaries on the Epistle have been published, and also many expositions that have sought to use its teaching for devotional and practical ends. But few attempts, so far as I am aware, have been made to deal systematically with the outstanding themes of the Epistle, either as they are severally treated by St. Paul in this final statement of the meaning of the gospel, or still more as they are combined in a consistent and organic whole. Yet no other Epistle of St. Paul's lends itself in anything like the same way to such treatment, or so insistently demands it if its meaning is to be clearly and distinctly apprehended. Just as the unity of the Epistle to the Romans is to be found by treating it as an exposition of the Righteousness of God as revealed in the gospel, so, as it appears to me, the Epistle to the Ephesians will be seen to possess an even more closely integrated unity if it be treated as an expatiation on the subject of God in Christ Jesus. It is from this point of view that I have dealt with the Epistle in the following pages.

Such expository treatment of the Epistle must needs be continuous and must demand from the reader careful and continuous study. Some repetition and overlapping are inevitable, since the governing passages and points of view contained in the Epistle have manifold bearings and aspects. Indeed, though these may be distinguished, they are so vitally related as to be, not only inseparable, but interpenetrative.

Quite possibly some readers may find such repetition somewhat excessive, and the treatment here and there somewhat diffuse. For this the conditions under which the book has been prepared are in some degree accountable. It embodies the substance of a good many different discourses, and has been consolidated in the form of lectures delivered to a small Bible-class. From these it has been prepared for the Press with such scanty revision and emendations as a busy public life would permit. All that need be added is that the book is intended for the ordinary Bible student and not for the scholar. For this reason references to the original text have been almost entirely avoided. The exposition rests upon and assumes the work of the ordinary Commentaries. Especially I would acknowledge my obligation to that by the Dean of Wells, Dr. J. Armitage Robinson. The doctrinal interpretation of the gospel which appears to me to be contained in the Epistle has already been more systematically expounded in my previous book on *The Fatherhood of God in Christian Truth and Life*, and in its sequel, *The Christian Religion: Its Meaning and Proof*.

One word of apology I feel constrained to offer for attempting so great a theme, not only because of my personal limitations, but because of the many hindrances and drawbacks caused by the pressure of practical affairs. In venturing to send this volume to the Press I am impelled by the belief that the Epistle to the Ephesians conveys St. Paul's final message to the Christian Church as to Christ, His work, and life in Him, and that this message was never more vital than to-day. In attempting to give effect to this view by preaching and teaching based upon the Epistle, I have been so often encouraged by hearers who have gained light and help from the treatment, that I have felt constrained to gather it up and give it to the public, in the humble hope that, despite its imperfections, it may be used to bring the treasures of the Epistle within reach of some who have hitherto failed to enjoy them.

In conclusion, I would express my grateful acknowledgements to the Rev. R. Winboult Harding, B.D., who has very kindly gone over almost the whole of my MS., and has assisted me by very valuable suggestions.

J. Scott Lidgett.

Bermondsey Settlement,
Whitsun Day, 1915.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY: THE GENERAL FEATURES OF THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

This book is an attempt to survey the distinctive teaching of one of the greatest writings of the New Testament. The greatness of the Epistle to the Ephesians consists in the marvellous elevation of its standpoint and the breadth of its outlook. It consists also in the remarkable combination of qualities and interests that find complete and harmonious expression in it. Its spirituality is equalled by its intellectual power; its moral fervour by its sympathetic outlook upon history and upon man. Its scope is wider than that of any other apostolic writing, with the sole exception of the Epistle to the Romans, and it presents the whole body of Pauline teaching with a finality, breadth, and completeness that is hardly to be found even in the Epistle to the Romans. What is reached as a carefully reasoned conclusion in the Epistle to the Romans has become the accepted starting-point of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Hence the evangelic and catholic interpretation of Christ thus finally given, while it preserves all that is distinctive and permanent in Old Testament revelation,

is entirely free from the least trace of Jewish limitations. The reader should endeavour to study the Epistle without any presuppositions, and to come to it as though it were being read for the first time. Too often the magnificent utterances of a Scripture like this pass over the modern reader without making any definite impression on his mind. The phrases are familiar, the thoughts are profound; and between superficial familiarity on the one hand and the difficulty of profundity on the other, he seldom makes any determined effort carefully and systematically to grasp the meaning of what is set before him.

The Epistle to the Ephesians is a masterpiece of evangelical illumination. It demands, for its understanding, a kindred illumination in the reader. It must be studied with deep reflection and with large spiritual imagination. It needs to be set in line with the rest of the New Testament, and especially with the Pauline Epistles that were written before it.[1] It will then take its rightful place as the consummate and most comprehensive statement which even the New Testament contains of the meaning of the Christian religion, blending as nowhere else its evangelical, spiritual, moral, and universal elements. It is certainly the final statement of Pauline theology. In affirming this, there is no need to prejudge the question of its authorship, which must be considered by and by. Whether

[1] Especially with the Epistle to the Romans; for this purpose, at least, the most important member of the Main Group, consisting of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians.

St. Paul wrote it, or some later Christian, careful study will establish the conclusion that it emerges from the circle in which St. Paul's distinctive interpretation of the gospel of Christ was most influential. The whole Epistle is built up upon what was most characteristic alike of the thought and of the practical endeavour of the great Apostle. It is true, as will be seen later on, that this Epistle does not contain some of the characteristic words, and perhaps even conceptions, that abound in his earlier writings, notably in the Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans. Yet, whatever the explanation of this difference may be, it cannot avail for a moment to set aside the plain fact that without the previous Epistles of St. Paul and without his life-work this Epistle could not have come into existence. Thus the Epistle to the Ephesians, even if it be not the inevitable conclusion of the thought and life-work of St. Paul—for, strictly speaking, no work of genius is inevitable—yet forms the spiritual and intellectual culmination of the universally recognized writings of the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

Not merely, however, may this Epistle be taken as the crown and climax of the Pauline theology, but of the New Testament as a whole. It stands in very close relations with certain other of the New Testament writings besides those of St. Paul. If this fact is to be properly appreciated, the Epistle must be set side by side with St. John xiv. to xvii., with the First Epistle of St. John, and with the First Epistle of St. Peter. A brief consideration of these

will enable us to set the Epistle to the Ephesians in its place in this great group of New Testament Scriptures. In making this comparison, it should be borne in mind that these three are just the most fully developed portions of the New Testament outside the writings directly or indirectly attributable to St. Paul.

The Great Discourse in St. John xiv.–xvii. contains our Lord's final statement as to the relationships between Himself and the Father on the one side, and between Himself and His disciples on the other. He is 'the Way, and the Truth, and the Life' (John xiv. 6). The condition of all spiritual life is found in 'abiding' in Him (John xv. 4–7). The process of salvation is set forth in the following stages. Those who come to the Son are thereby brought by Him to the Father, and the glorified Christ sends to them 'another Paraclete' (John xiv. 16). Yet, though this process takes the form of a clearly marked succession, both of historic events and of individual experience, the coming of the Spirit is the fulfilment of the indwelling of the Father and the Son. '*We* will come unto him, and make Our abode with him' (John xiv. 23). Hence the whole teaching of the Discourse centres in and depends upon the immanence of God in Christ, and the immanence of Christ in His disciples. This twofold immanence, which carries with it the corresponding indwelling of believers in Christ and thereby their coming unto the Father, supplies the basis upon which rests the commission given by our Lord to His disciples.

Now, one of the governing conceptions of the Epistle to the Ephesians is found in the pregnant phrase 'In Christ.' As used in the Epistle it has a twofold significance. It has a vital meaning, for Christians are members of Christ's *body*. It also suggests that by their incorporation in the life-giving Christ believers are brought into *a new universe*, of which He is both the Reality and the Light. But though there are distinctions in the form of the teaching that may quickly be detected, it is clear that the teaching of the Epistle to the Ephesians on this subject is substantially the same as that which is presented to us in the final discourse of our Lord as reported by St. John. While the fundamental resemblance between the two is very striking, the Epistle to the Ephesians may be treated as giving a comprehensive survey of the whole content of the living relationships, the nature of which is revealed by our Lord in the Discourses. These relationships are treated in the Epistle as furnishing the explanation, not only of the spiritual history of those who enter into them, but of the universe itself, in which these transcendent relationships hold a final, a central, and an illuminating place.

The distinction between the Discourse and the Epistle may be summed up as follows. The Discourse is concentrated upon the personal relationships with Christ and with the Triune God in Christ. The nature and effect of these personal relationships are set forth in a description that treats access to the Father as resulting from the fulfilment of our

Lord's mediatorial history, on the one hand, and from His indwelling in believers by the Spirit, on the other. Then, also, this twofold fulfilment, both of our Lord's transcendent life-work and of His immanent relations to believers, is treated as prospective. The Discourse is a promise, though the promise is reported in peaceful and radiant assurance of its completely realized fulfilment.

The Epistle to the Ephesians starts where the Discourse ends. It rests upon the experience of the twofold fulfilment which has become the sure foundation of all Christian faith and life. Thence the Epistle proceeds to expatiate upon the inexhaustible promise contained in this experienced fulfilment. It sets the experienced work of Christ in its universal relations as the fulfilment of the divine purpose, the revelation of the spiritual constitution and destiny of the universe, and the pledge of divine mercy to mankind.

The First Epistle of St. John is occupied above all with the fact of the Incarnation. The 'only-begotten Son' who became incarnate is 'the Word of life' and 'the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us' (1 John i. 2).

All that is to be known of God is conveyed to man in and through the Incarnate Son. 'God is love' (1 John iv. 16), and we know this because 'God hath sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him' (1 John iv. 9). It should be noted that St. John begins and ends with the historic fact of the Incarnation and with

its spiritual import. He does not put it in relation, so far as the First Epistle is concerned, either with the preceding dispensation or with the whole nature of the universe in which it takes place. He builds everything upon his own personal acquaintance with 'the Word of life,' with 'that which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld and our hands handled' (1 John i. 1).

Here, again, the Epistle to the Ephesians stands in very close relation with that which is deepest in the thought of St. John. The historic fact of Christ is central and all-containing. It is true that the Epistle to the Ephesians lays the main stress upon the fact, not so much of the incarnate as of the exalted Christ who 'ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things' (iv. 10). The ascended is the crucified and risen Christ. Yet the foundation is securely laid in the Incarnation. Christ is learned 'as truth is *in Jesus*' (iv. 21)—the historic human Personality. So fully has Christ entered into and summed up in Himself the experience of humanity that, not only did He die, but 'He **also** descended into the lower parts of the earth' (iv. 9). His present exaltation is prepared for and matched by the depth of His previous humiliation. Hence, though attention is fixed in the Epistle to the Ephesians upon the outcome of the Incarnation, the fundamental assumption of the Epistle is in entire agreement with 1 John.

Yet, while this is the case, the Epistle to the Ephesians rises in a sense to a loftier height, and,

therefore, takes a wider survey, just because it displays the fact of Christ as completed in the ascension and then sets this completed Fact in its place as central and supreme both in the history by which the eternal purpose of the Father is fulfilled, and in the whole universe which co-operates to fulfil this purpose and is consummated in so doing. In 1 John all this is implicit in the Incarnation. For the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh is neither a mere beginning nor an isolated event. It stands expressly for the whole life-history in which the manifestation is completed. And this manifestation is that of the Life, which as the Light drives out darkness, revealing the entire reality of God, the universe and man. It is essentially that of Love as the life-principle of all reality. All this is made explicit, in its universal bearings, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, by a doctrine of the ascended Christ, which rests plainly on the Incarnation and would be meaningless without it.

Once more, there is a remarkable similarity between the Epistle to the Ephesians and the First Epistle of St. Peter. God is described in both as 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (i. 3 and 1 Pet. i. 3). Hope is the distinguishing mark of the spiritual experience into which believers in Christ are brought. St. Peter describes Christians as having been begotten 'again unto a living hope' (1 Pet. i. 3). The Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of those who had 'before hoped in Christ' (i. 12). The ground of hope is said by St. Peter to be in 'the resurrection of Jesus Christ

from the dead.' This great event is inseparably connected with our share in 'an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away' (1 Pet. i. 4). The Epistle to the Ephesians connects '*the hope* of His calling' and 'the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints' with 'the working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead' (i. 18–20). St. Peter, like the Epistle to the Ephesians, connects grace and glory (Eph. i. 6–18; 1 Pet. i. 9, 10). Again, St. Peter dwells upon the search made by the prophets into 'what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them' (1 Pet. i. 11) in a way that is clearly akin to the teaching of the Epistle to the Ephesians as to 'the dispensation of the fullness of the times' (i. 10) and the unveiling of 'the mystery of Christ' (iii. 1–12).[1]

Further, St. Peter strikes the note of redemption (1 Pet. i. 17–21) with the same emphasis as is given to it in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Again, St. Peter speaks of Christ as the 'chief corner stone, elect, precious' (1 Pet. ii. 4–8). The Epistle to the Ephesians also speaks of Christ as being 'the chief corner stone' (ii. 20). According to St. Peter, believers 'as living stones are built up a spiritual

[1] The resemblance consists in St. Peter's suggestion that the prophets sought, but did not find, complete enlightenment as to a secret which was only partially disclosed to them.

house' (1 Pet. ii. 5). According to the Epistle to the Ephesians they 'are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit' (ii. 22). In close connexion with this reference to the spiritual temple, there is found both in the one Epistle and in the other a description of Christians as being the people of God. As St. Peter expresses it, they are 'an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession' (1 Pet. ii. 9–11), while the Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of them as 'fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God' (ii. 19), and more than once refers to Christians as God's inheritance (i. 11–18). However it may be explained, the similar concatenation of the two sets of figures in both Epistles—although suggested by the Old Testament—is very striking.

Again, the ethical note is equally prominent in both Epistles. In particular, there is a remarkable resemblance in the prominence that is given to family duties, to the relations of husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants, as transformed by the example and spirit of Christ (iv. 22–v. 9; and 1 Pet. iv. 18–v. 7).

One noteworthy difference exists, however, between the two Epistles. The First Epistle of St. Peter has a strongly marked eschatological note. 'The end of all things is at hand,' the Apostle writes (1 Pet. iv. 7). Here there is a connecting link with the Epistles to the Thessalonians. The Epistle to the Ephesians, on the other hand, does not deal with the subject except in a single reference to 'the day of redemption' (iv. 30). Further-

more, the description of the divine purpose as being 'unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth' (i. 10) suggests a transformed or an enlarged eschatology, as compared with that of the Thessalonian Epistles. In all other respects the resemblance between the two Epistles is remarkable. Yet, though the two are so intimately related, the Epistle to the Ephesians soars higher and takes a vaster survey than does the First Epistle of St. Peter. While the doctrine is substantially and sometimes almost literally the same in both, it is presented by the Epistle to the Ephesians in a profounder and loftier —because a more universal—way.

This comparative survey abundantly warrants the conclusion that the Epistle to the Ephesians is not only the climax of Pauline teaching, but that it occupies a similar position in regard to the most developed writings of the New Testament generally. It stands in vital relations to them; yet at every point where it touches them, it is marked by a depth and fullness of teaching peculiarly its own.

The Epistle to the Ephesians contains the fullest statement to be found even in the New Testament of the meaning of the Christian faith and of its grounds. It is impossible to give a complete account of the religion of Christ, of the grounds upon which it is based, and of its outlook upon the world, without having taken full cognisance of this presentation of it. In fact, it may truly be said that no better text-book than this Epistle could be

used in order to explain to non-Christian inquirers what is the nature of the Christian faith, what are the essential marks of the Christian temper, and what the claims of the Christian revelation upon mankind.

A general survey will suffice to bring out, by way of introduction, the distinctive features of the Epistle.

1. In the first place, it is clear that the starting-point of the writer is experimental. When he soars to the greatest heights it is on the wings of experience and not of speculation. He is obviously describing a spiritual state into which he and others have entered, and presents the spiritual realities that are revealed in and through that experience. The Apostle opens with the statement that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ 'hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ' (i. 3). It is clear that a distinctive gift bestowed upon the inner personal life is described, and that while 'the heavenly places' are immeasurably above the ordinary levels of human experience, they have become the abiding home of the writer's spiritual consciousness. Later on the writer speaks of 'the exceeding greatness of His [God's] power to us-ward who believe' (i. 19), and of the experience, common both to himself and to his readers, of having been 'quickened together with Christ' (ii. 5). 'The unsearchable riches of Christ' are treated as being in the possession of believers (iii. 8). These are but a few illustrations of many that might be given, and they are typical of the whole.

The consciousness that is described is all-pervasive. The truths and realities accepted by faith are not reached as the last conclusion of any process of reasoning, working apart from or extending beyond a personal spiritual experience. The realities that are believed in and set forth are made immediately manifest in and through the experience. The writer is dealing with certain direct and illuminating intuitions he desires all men to share. He is commissioned ' *to make* all men *see* what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things ' (iii. 9). This experience of believed realities through a divine and inward illumination engages, vivifies, and satisfies the whole round of spiritual powers. They are all awakened and alert. They work together in a perfect harmony, in which keenness of spiritual intuition and even of intellectual perception, moral enthusiasm, and ardent aspiration are combined and raised to poetic, or rather prophetic, vision. The religion thus experienced holds together a remarkable definiteness with an inexhaustible fullness. In the boundless sphere that is opened up the powers and possibilities of personality in their widest range are awakened. They realize the fullness of their potential energy in God, and the spiritual apprehension thus empowered is seised of the gift of eternal life with the infinitude of its promise. This experimental note is the first mark of the Epistle.

2. This experience, so wonderful in itself, is inseparably associated with, is rooted in and moulded

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by, certain great facts in regard to Christ. Without at present considering the historic reality of these facts, it is sufficient to note that everything in the experience described by the writer is held by him to depend on them. He lays significant emphasis on the historic personality of Christ as the bearer, the living embodiment of the truth, when he speaks of truth as being '*in Jesus*' (iv. 21). He opens by connecting the experience of believers with the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. 'The exceeding greatness of His [God's] power to us-ward who believe' is 'according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places' (i. 19, 20). Similarly, the writer dwells upon the Cross of Christ, and speaks of Him as reconciling both Jew and Gentile 'in one body unto God, through the Cross' (ii. 16). Again he says, 'He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things' (iv. 10).

The experience could not exist apart from these facts: the facts are incomplete, or rather inoperative, except in so far as they issue in this experience. It is in and through these facts as creating this experience that the Christhood of Jesus becomes manifest and is made effective.

3. These facts, as creative of this experience, are inseparably bound up with the personality of Christ. Above all, they reveal His divine relationship in all the plenitude of its spiritual activity and power.

The personality of Christ realizes its influence in and through the redemptive facts of His life. The facts in themselves have no efficacy except as manifestations of His personality and deeds of His will. The facts do their work in and through the personality of Christ. His personality stands in a unique relationship to God, who is described pre-eminently as 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (i. 4).

Because of this unique relation to God, Christ stands in equally unique relations to man. Manhood is unfulfilled until the sphere of its being is 'in Christ.' The life of salvation, as set forth in the Epistle, has no existence apart from Christ. It is unceasingly derived from an indwelling in Him that causes all that He is, all that He has done, and all that He is unceasingly doing to work with sovereign effect upon the inmost being of the believer. The spiritual life can as little remain existent if it be torn from its environment in Christ as could that of the body if torn from its material environment. Thus there is a unique blending, according to the Epistle, both of the personality and of the history of Christ with the experience of believers. None of these three elements of the Christian whole can be treated apart from the rest. Each has its own place both in defining and in completing the rest. The facts, stupendous as they are, are not mere miracles; they are the congruous manifestations of a unique personality, and the means of its continuous working. Thus, also, they never become hardened in their externality, but

are the objects of faith and the vehicles of spiritual influence.

In the same way, the personality of the exalted Christ, while most real, is never cut off from the historic past. This historic past persists and continues to operate in the personality, and the personality continues to exert influence only through the great line of action which is marked out by the Incarnation, the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Ascension.

Hence, lastly, the experience is fixed and centred in this personality and these facts. It is not a vague and indefinite soaring of aspiration. It is illimitable because the personality of Christ and the contents of His work are illimitable. They impose no fetters upon the spirit, but they do prescribe both the means and the way of advance. This union and interdependence between Christ, His history, and the experience of His fullness is one of the unique marks of the Christian religion.

4. The experience of Christ enjoyed by His followers is that of redemption. This is so distinctive a feature that it vitally affects every part of the doctrine of Christ and of salvation in Him contained in the Epistle. The opening statement that ' in Him,' namely, the Beloved, ' we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace ' (i. 7) governs the whole Epistle. All the blessings enjoyed through the experience of Christ are dependent upon, and give full effect to, the redemption which, as received by men, consists in the forgiveness of their tres-

passes. The wonder of God's grace is to be found, not only in the infinite blessedness of the destiny to which He calls men, but especially in the fact that this destiny can only be fulfilled by the Divine dealing with sin in the gift of Christ and in the sacrifice of His Cross. Hence God is rich, not merely in bounty, but 'in mercy' (ii. 4). The decisive deed of Christ is that of the Cross (ii. 13–22). Through it the new Commonwealth is founded upon an act of atonement which reconciles Jew and Gentile 'in one body unto God through the Cross' (ii. 16). Because of this the atoning deed of Christ issues in a redemptive proclamation to mankind: 'He came to preach peace to you that were afar off and peace to them that were nigh' (ii. 17). The final issue of all this is said to be at 'the day of *redemption*' (iv. 30).

5. Yet one of the most remarkable features of the Epistle is its perfect blending of all the elements and interests of religion. These may roughly be designated as the redemptive, the mystical, and the practical. As so frequently held, these are brought into collision with one another, those who feel called upon to emphasize any one of the three seldom doing full justice to the others. But in the Epistle to the Ephesians redemption depends upon the mystic relations of the spiritual life for its accomplishment, and upon the practical for its complete expression. Alike the grace of God, the atoning deed of Christ, and the quickening of the Spirit are conditioned by a mystic relation of man to God in Christ without which they would be impossible. Hence redemption from sin and the full satisfaction

of man's spiritual nature in God go together. The forgiveness and destruction of sin leads to the fulfilment of human nature both in God and in the divinely constituted relationships of ordinary human life.

6. In the threefold whole—namely, the Personality of Christ, made manifest in the redemptive facts, and experienced with redemptive efficacy by believers—is contained the final revelation of God. Perhaps if the supreme distinction of the Epistle to the Ephesians is to be sought, it may be found in the doctrine that sets forth this revelation of God. The Epistle gives a sustained and complete description of the attitude of God towards the world and of His redemptive purpose in Christ, such as is hardly to be found elsewhere; not even in the Epistle to the Romans.

It is clear at a glance that this doctrine of God is built up upon much knowledge of Him that has gone before. It assumes all the great results of Old Testament Theism. But it transcends them and fulfils the doctrine they contain. The revelation of God is completed and made available for mankind in the Person and work of Christ, and in the life of the Spirit, in which His Person finds its full manifestation and His work its consummation. The precise doctrine of God contained in the Epistle must be more carefully studied at a later stage. It will be sufficient for the moment to take a general glance at it. The sovereignty of God, as realized in the Old Testament, is at the foundation of the whole. God is both transcendent and immanent.

No part of the history of the world ever escapes from His activity. History is the unfolding of His 'eternal purpose.' But this purpose is now described by one word, and one word only : it is a purpose of *grace*, and of grace made manifest in redemptive mercy. The darkness has passed away before the radiant splendour of this grace. The outstanding gift of grace consists in the assured experience given to believers of a Sonship which corresponds to the divine Fatherhood. Of this Fatherhood sovereignty is the expression and instrument. Sovereign purpose is actuated by love and works for the redemption and transformation of all things in Christ. This is the master truth set forth in the Person and work of Christ and made known in the experience of believers. In the fulfilment of this purpose of grace is to be found the complete revelation of God.

This revelation of God is not separately conveyed by inspiration to the intellectual faculties of man. It is made known in and through the redemption contained in the completed fact of Christ and the impression made by it on the spiritual life of man in the full range of his activities and interests. Hence the revelation of God and the redemptive fact of Christ, taken in this largest sense, are inseparable from one another. The doctrine of God is contained in Christ—His Person, His work, His activity and its effects. In and through all these there is conveyed to men the knowledge of God and of the ends His holy love is concerned to bring about both in the hearts of men and throughout the universe.

The revelation of God, thus conveyed, becomes in its turn the principle by which the work of Christ itself is determined and explained. Hence, while Christ is the substance, and while the experience of Christ contains the verification, of the revelation of God, this revelation itself becomes, in a sense, an independent spiritual possession. It is never separated from the facts in which it is made manifest, but it comes to shine in its own light as the one doctrine of God which satisfies every part of man's spiritual being, and furnishes both the grounds upon which his faith rests and the standard by which he tries the nature and history of the world. This final theology, forming an indivisible and indestructible whole, is presented to faith as its governing idea and its inspiring ideal. Hence it contains within itself the powers of a ceaseless renewal. The old theology is always becoming new ; yet its renewing is but the means by which its old content is afresh revealed. The knowledge of God is for the Epistle to the Ephesians secure, being grounded for ever in Christ, but it is conveyed by means of living communion with God in Christ, through the Spirit.

7. Hence the knowledge of God is implanted in and fosters a transcendent spiritual life. Every true interest of healthy human life is emphasized in the Epistle. No Epistle, if carefully studied, conveys a more striking impression of broad humanity. The highest temper of human brotherliness, of faith in human nature, and of generous sympathy with it is clearly displayed. There is the frankest recognition and the strongest insistence upon the

whole network of human relations, especially those of the family, in which all other relations are rooted and grounded (see Eph. iii. 14, 15). The ordinary human side of life is not disparaged, but magnified. And yet, there is a whole wealth of mystic experience, carrying with it the sense of immediate contact with the spiritual world ; of boundless advance in the apprehension and enjoyment of realities that cannot be made known to sense. The life that is set before us in the Epistle is one of exuberant thanksgiving and of soaring aspiration which is infinite, eternal, and unceasingly progressive. It might be thought that these two elements of mysticism and humanity would run on parallel lines without ever meeting ; the mystic experience being but externally joined with an unequal yoke-fellow in the ordinary course of human life, with its circle of relationships and its round of duties. Even then, this spiritual combination would be remarkable, for mysticism has seldom emphasized, or at all events articulated, the ordinary elements and interests of human life. On the other hand, such stress as is laid by the Epistle upon the common interests of life has too seldom been found side by side with the rapture of religious aspiration. Hence the mere juxtaposition of these two interests would be remarkable. But in this Epistle both are fused, each strengthening the other. The key to this wonderful blending is to be found in the emphasis laid upon the meaning and importance of human personality in its divine relations.

It is this rich development of human personality

in the relationship of Sonship and its consequent enjoyment of fellowship with the Father that blends the mystic and practical, keeping the mystical from vagueness, whether of thought or sympathy, and the practical from becoming empty of spiritual inspiration. Hence the spiritual features of the Christian religion manifested in this Epistle are unique, as holding together in perfect harmony the pervading sense and influence of God with the apprehension of the worth and meaning of human personality and of all the means by which personality manifests itself in the world. Such avoidance of the dangers alike of mysticism and of pragmatism by the entrance of this larger life of personality uplifted, transformed, and perfected in God, is the spiritual wonder of the Epistle.

8. Hence this transcendent spiritual life creates a new morality. The moral creativeness of the new religion is one of its distinctive marks. Redemption is not merely an inner experience, but an outer transformation. A new purity and a new power go hand in hand together. It is difficult to say whether the purity or the power is the more remarkable. Together they so transform the life in all its relationships as to create what is nothing else than a new humanity, standing out from the old by a splendour of holiness, which has lost all that is merely conventional or ceremonial and has become the spiritual passion of a new morality in which the noblest promise of human nature is redemptively fulfilled. Hence, we witness the complete reconciliation of religion and morality. The enlisting of the new

spiritual experience and power in the uplifting and renewing of character brings a complete equipment for the whole range of human duties, in which new sanctity and meaning are now found.

9. On this basis of transcendent religion fulfilled in great morality men are lifted up to enjoy an infinite enlargement of the horizons of the spirit. The sweeping survey of the Epistle is one of its most marvellous features. This survey reveals nothing but promise. Power has been given to rise above the oppressing sense of discords in life to apprehend the eternal harmony ; and to apprehend it, not as remote from the universe in God, but as making its triumphal entry from God to transform the whole world until His good pleasure is fulfilled, ' to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth ' (i. 10).

10. Of this restitution of all things, the creation of the new humanity, seen as the family of God, the fellowship of His household, the community of fellow citizens, is the pledge. If this is the Epistle of the Spirit it is equally the Epistle of the Catholic Church. Yet there is no Epistle freer, or perhaps so free, from ecclesiastical limitations. The Epistle is concerned, not so much with a particular type of visible organization, as with a body that is inspired through and through with the life of the Spirit and that exists as the vehicle of that life in the renovation of the universe. Every blessing that is attained and enjoyed in the Church becomes, not an exclusive privilege, but a prophecy of what is intended for mankind. Exclusiveness is banished by a spiritual universalism

that does not ignore present distinctions, but sees in the experience of the saints the unfolding and the power of a world-embracing purpose.

11. Hence, lastly, the spirit of the Catholic Church, as represented by the Apostle, in apprehending this wonderful reality, becomes adequate to the reality it apprehends. It is the earthly reflection, the human expression and embodiment, of the reality that is revealed. It can never be content until it knows and sets forth 'what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth' of the divine reality. There is complete correspondence between the truth and the spirit that apprehends it. The faith of the Church, as of the individual, becomes entirely one with its object. Henceforth it is the object that upholds and inspires the faith; not the faith that asserts or struggles to affirm the object. Believers do not, in the Epistle, uphold the faith; rather they are upheld by it.

Such is the unique impression made by this Epistle. May we not say that it has peculiar significance for modern thought? The holiness of the universe, the supremacy of Christ in it, and of the spiritual as made manifest in Christ—all this is brought home with irresistible force. The needs and satisfaction of man's spirit are treated in the Epistle as witnessing to what is highest and innermost in the universe and as foreshadowing therefore its ultimate destiny. Herein may be found the material, both for a philosophy of religion and for a religious philosophy of history. And the Christ who mediates the whole is an inspiration, not a fetter. The human life

in God which has its spring and its ideal in Christ is yet a life of freedom in the Spirit. For man's self-realization is from first to last governed by Christ and guided by His Spirit. Yet Christ triumphs through, and not over, the freedom in which alone can human personality be made perfect. And—strange though it may at first appear—the very fact that there is such governance by an eternal Exemplar and such authoritative guidance by the living Spirit, so far from destroying, emphasizes the reality of freedom. There is nothing restrictive in the spiritual prospect, nothing meaningless in the living process by which the purpose of God is carried out. Here, then, is the wonderful triumph of personality, redeemed, transformed, and satisfied in God. It is the last and greatest word of revelation, shedding as much light on the nature and character of God as on the destiny of man.

CHAPTER II

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLE

After the preliminary survey of the Epistle to the Ephesians which has been made in the previous chapter, the next inquiry must be concerning its authorship. The importance of this inquiry should neither be exaggerated nor belittled. The teaching of the Epistle must stand or fall by its own merits. It shines in its own light by whomsoever it was written, and is clearly founded upon the teaching contained in the universally received Epistles of St. Paul. Yet for many reasons there is importance as well as interest in answering the question whether Paul himself wrote it or not. The most serious concern undoubtedly is that of the relations of this Epistle to the whole body of Pauline teaching. Yet it is impossible to dismiss, as of trifling moment, the inquiry whether an Epistle which appears to be the climax of the Pauline teaching is the spiritual product of St. Paul's own maturity, or whether it is the work of a disciple liberating his master's message from accidental limitations and giving final expression to its highest and most universal elements. If the latter, the teaching of the Epistle will still stand on its own merits ; if the former, it will gain, not only

from the apostolic authority of St. Paul, but from the cumulative force of his personality and spiritual history. In the latter case also it may well be claimed that, as the climax of St. Paul's own teaching, this Epistle enables the careful student to discern more completely and surely both the real tendency and the true perspective of all the Apostle's previous writings.

Tradition has always ascribed the authorship of the Epistle to the Ephesians to St. Paul. It is assumed by all the early Fathers who have quoted from the Epistle. At the same time the question is not so simple as might appear. The Epistle stands out from all the other writings of St. Paul by the presence of well-marked characteristics not found elsewhere. These peculiarities are both positive and negative. To begin with, there is a complete absence of all local references. There are no such personal greetings as are customary with St. Paul. Nothing is said about any local conditions of Church life, or of any external relations. There are also well-marked differences of language and style. There are a considerable number of words and expressions to be found nowhere else in St. Paul's writings. Sentences flow on into paragraphs with scarcely any break, and new themes or new aspects of the same themes suddenly suggest themselves to the author's mind with an almost complete absence of methodical arrangement.

Besides all this, the Epistle is completely free from the argumentation that marks most of St. Paul's writing. It is an expatiation rather than an exposition. The note of controversy is entirely

absent. It is almost completely free from those distinctive marks of Rabbinic tradition, which so obviously tinge the previous Epistles. It appears in some respects to represent a more approximating attitude towards what was best in the Gentile religions of the time.[1] At every point the writer passes into intercession and doxology. These peculiarities must all of them be clearly accounted for if the traditional view of the authorship is to be maintained.

One most important fact, however, stands out at once. The Epistle is closely connected with the Epistle to the Colossians. All internal and external marks of Pauline authorship that belong to the Epistle to the Colossians must be held to strengthen the impression that this sister Epistle is by the same writer. The resemblances are to be seen, not merely in the language, but still more in the subjects to which prominence is given. The Epistle to the Colossians is chiefly devoted to two great subjects. In the first place to the divine supremacy of Christ, and in the second to the nature of redemption as wrought out in the Cross of Christ and as manifested in a spiritual quickening—or resurrection—which introduces believers into a heavenly sphere of life. Not only are these two great subjects treated in essentially the same way in the two Epistles, but there are minute correspondences between the two. If the Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of 'the Father of glory' and of

[1] For example, in the influence upon it of the Mystery Religions.

'the working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead,' the Epistle to the Colossians unites these two in the statement that believers are 'strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory' (Col. i. 11). If the Ephesians describes grace as being 'freely bestowed on us in *the Beloved*' (i. 7), Col. i. 13 speaks of 'the kingdom of *the Son of His love*.' The statement in Eph. i. 7, 'in whom we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses,' corresponds with that of Col. i. 14, 'in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.' A 'Spirit of wisdom and revelation' is needed, according to the Ephesians, if the Church is to apprehend the meaning of redemption (i. 17). The Epistle to the Colossians speaks of being filled 'with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding' (Col. i. 9). The opening paragraph of the Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of the good pleasure of God 'to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth' (i. 10). The Epistle to the Colossians declares that in the Son 'were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist' (Col. i. 16). The place of Christ in the universe is in both Epistles closely connected with His special relation to His Church (Eph. i. 20–23; Col. i. 15–18). The uni-

versal scope of redemption, as it is set before us in the Epistle to the Ephesians, is emphasized in the Epistle to the Colossians, which declares that it was 'the good pleasure' of the Father through the Son 'to reconcile all things unto Himself' (Col. i. 20). This work of reconciliation is in both cases traced back to the Father as its source. His 'eternal purpose' dominates the whole treatment of the Epistle to the Ephesians, being the first note that is struck. In the Epistle to the Colossians the work of redemption is ascribed to 'the good pleasure of the Father' (Col. i. 19). The peculiar term 'the fullness' (τὸ πλήρωμα) is used both in Eph. i. 23 and in Col. i. 19. The salvation of man in both Epistles is a matter of concern to the heavenly hierarchy. In Eph. iii. 10 it is said that 'the manifold wisdom of God' is made known in Christ to the 'principalities and the powers in the heavenly places.' This conception is even strengthened in the Epistle to the Colossians by the statement that all things, 'in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him and unto Him' (Col. i. 16). And later on the statement is made that all things are to be reconciled unto the Father through Christ, 'whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens' (Col. i. 20). In both Epistles peace is specified as the distinctive blessing that follows upon reconciliation through the Cross (Eph. ii. 16–18; Col. i. 20). The same prominence is given in both

Epistles to the experience of spiritual quickening, and in each this spiritual quickening is treated as being received in fellowship with the risen Christ. The Epistle to the Ephesians states that 'God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ' (ii. 4, 5). Similarly the Epistle to the Colossians declares, 'And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did He quicken together with Him' (ii. 13). In Ephesians the triumph of the life in Christ is described as a sitting with God 'in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (ii. 6). In Colossians is found the great passage in which the consequence of being 'raised together with Christ' is said to be that believers should 'seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God' (iii. 1–4). The catholic fellowship of Jew and Gentile in Christ is a main subject of the Epistle to the Ephesians. In the Colossians it is laid down that for those who have put on the new man 'there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all' (Col. iii. 11). Furthermore, there is the greatest similarity between the moral exhortations in both Epistles and the same use of the contrasts between life and death, light and darkness, to set forth the spiritual change that has been wrought by Christ. The paragraphs on domestic relationships and duties in both Epistles are almost precisely alike. Spiritual exal-

tation, according to both Epistles, is to be manifested ' in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs ' (Eph. v. 19 ; Col. iii. 16), and praise, thus finding utterance, is associated in both passages with thanksgiving. The similarities between the two Epistles could be illustrated in yet greater detail, but what has been said may suffice.

There is one point of difference in which the doctrine of the Epistle to the Colossians seems to go beyond that of the Ephesians. In Ephesians the summing up of all things in Christ is still future. It is the goal towards which all things are proceeding. In Colossians this all-embracing end has been prepared for from the beginning, since all things have been created through Him and consist in Him. Yet a little reflection will show how closely the two are bound up together, for it is inconceivable that the goal of the Epistle to the Ephesians should be reached unless Christ, the Son of God, has stood in immanent, as well as transcendent, relations to the universe from the beginning.

It may safely be concluded therefore that every consideration which goes to strengthen belief in the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Colossians contributes equally to establish a similar belief in regard to the Epistle to the Ephesians. The only qualification of this assurance that must be made is that closer examination of the Epistle to the Ephesians should show that the similarities between the two Epistles cannot be explained by the supposition of borrowing or imitation. It must be made clear that the same master's hand is

plainly at work in both, coupling similarity of outlook with full independence of treatment. Before passing from a comparison of the two Epistles to examine the distinctive features of the Epistle to the Ephesians, reference must be made to the fact that in each Epistle Tychicus is accredited in identical terms (Eph. vi. 21–22; Col. iv. 7–8) as St. Paul's messenger. To take no higher ground for the moment, is it not reasonable to accept this as conclusive testimony that St. Paul wrote both Epistles, rather than to charge the author of so lofty a work as the Epistle to the Ephesians with an unworthy attempt falsely to pose as the great Apostle?

It is beyond the scope of the present study of the Epistle to deal exhaustively with the arguments which establish the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Colossians, or with all the marks of such close connexion between the two Epistles as warrants the conclusion that if St. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Colossians, he must also be the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians. The present inquiry has chiefly in view the position of those who, accepting the Pauline authorship, not merely of the Main Group of Epistles, but also of the other Epistles of the Imprisonment (Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon), deny or question it in the case of this Epistle. This denial or questioning may admit of compromises by the admission, in varying degrees, of Pauline influence over the thought, or even the composition, of the Epistle. What is important for the present purpose is to

show that this Epistle stands in such relation to the other Epistles, and especially to the Epistles to the Romans and to the Colossians, that it may be treated as the culmination of St. Paul's teaching. And not only so, but that this culmination carries with it so distinctly the authority of the great Apostle himself, that it may be treated as the ripe product of his own experience, and, therefore, as casting light upon the whole development of his thought and teaching. If this be established, a principle of interpretation will be supplied to the earlier Epistles which will reveal their true proportions and the real tendency of all the elements of St. Paul's teaching by the light of this, its final masterpiece.

A closer examination of the Epistle to the Ephesians itself will at once produce certain broad impressions.

1. The most obvious of these is that the writer, whoever he may have been, was a most remarkable man. The stamp of spiritual genius of the highest order is upon his writings. Even after full account has been taken of the close connexion between this Epistle and the Epistle to the Colossians, it remains true that the whole treatment of the subjects dealt with in this Epistle is highly individual and independent. The author is completely master of his materials in a way that is impossible for the imitator. He handles them freely. Wherever this Epistle presents resemblances with what St. Paul has written elsewhere, it has just those marks of freshness which may be expected from a great

master, who deals once more under changed conditions and in the light of increased experience with the themes that govern his thought. Such freedom and mastery are wholly incompatible with the work of an artificial imitator or of a dependent commentator upon a great author. To borrow an expression from pictorial art, it cannot be said that this writer belongs to the school of St. Paul in the sense that he is dependent upon a creative originality which he does not share. The marks of first-hand creativeness are too striking for any such explanation.

2. In the next place, the author has entered upon his new catholicity of spiritual fellowship and outlook by a great transition. It is clear that the equal communion between Jew and Gentile upon which he dwells is something that strikes him with the splendour of novelty. And this effect is not merely imaginative, but spiritual and moral as well. The depth and expansiveness of the Epistle are due to the fact that every sympathy and affection of the writer's being has been deepened and enlarged by the new fellowship that has been opened up to him in Christ. At the same time, careful study will show that this transition has been made from the side of Jewish and not of Gentile religion. Universalist as the Epistle is in the best sense of the term, it is dyed ingrain with the presuppositions of the Hebrew revelation. The eternal purpose of God, His universal sovereignty, His covenant with His people, their salvation as due to a great redemptive deed, the treatment of this deed as establishing

God's sovereign rights over men and securing their blessedness only in and through His glory, their calling to sonship as an act of grace, the age-long hope of the Jews with which the writer identifies himself, the emphasis on holiness, all reveal traces of Jewish influence upon that which is highest and deepest in the Christian faith. The writer distinctly states that he is a Jew, by identifying himself with those who had entertained the Messianic hope beforehand, in contrast with his Gentile readers who had now come to share in its fruition (i. 12, 13, ii. 13). The cumulative impression made by all these features is amply sufficient to convince an impartial investigator that the Jewish standpoint taken up is not assumed in order to personate St. Paul, but is natural to the writer. The author carries over into the larger life of the present all the distinctive spiritual presuppositions and ideals in which he has been reared.

3. Moreover, the writer's transition to the broader life and fellowship of the Catholic Church has been made by a profound experience of redemption. The note of this experienced redemption is everywhere dominant from first to last. This mark is in itself distinctively Pauline. In the great argument contained in the two chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians in which St. Paul vindicates his conduct towards Gentiles and condemns the halting attitude of St. Peter, it is the experience of redemption in Christ that leads him as a direct and inevitable consequence to the broadest fellowship with the Gentiles: 'We being Jews by nature,

and not sinners of the Gentiles, yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, save through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law ' (Gal. ii. 15–16). This decisive experience carried with it the entire abandonment of Jewish privilege. It caused the Apostle to take his place on human and not on Jewish ground. He saw in Christ the one Saviour from world-wide sin, and in faith the one means of entering into the life of salvation. The evil, the Redeemer, and the faculty—or act—by which the redemption is received are all universal, and not particular in their nature. They belong to mankind and not to Jews only. Hence the Apostle's renunciation alike of Jewish privileges and customs in order to enter into the catholic communion of the Church means for him simply full consistency with and obedience to the spiritual logic of his experience of Christ as the Saviour from sin. In the same way, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, these two, the experience of redemption in Christ and the full entrance of the Jew and Gentile into the equal fellowship of all believers, are bound together. There is no superficial resemblance between the two passages. The point of view of Ephesians is certainly not copied from that of Galatians. They are clearly independent, but congruous parts of the same great experience which of necessity couples redemption and catholicity.

4. Again, there is a resumption in this Epistle of the great Pauline themes. The first note struck

is that of 'the eternal purpose' of God, which issues in the 'adoption of sons unto Himself.' This insistence upon the divine purpose as sovereign is completely in line with the great chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, in which the sovereignty of God and His electing purpose are set forth (Rom. ix.–xi.). The Epistle also revives the conception of 'adoption' upon which St. Paul, for reasons that will be explained later on, had laid such stress in Gal. iv. and Rom. viii. The prominence assigned to the resurrection of Christ, and its vital connexion alike with the divine status, the new life, and the spiritual empowerment set forth in the first chapter of Ephesians, are again thoroughly Pauline. Both the Epistle to the Romans and the First Epistle to the Corinthians dwell upon the resurrection of Christ as the supreme historic display of God's grace and glory, and treat it—or rather the divine glory made manifest in it—as the cause of the spiritual resurrection of believers. 'But if we die with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For the death that he died He died unto sin once: but the life that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus' (Rom. vi. 8–11). Again, Christ is treated in this Epistle as the universal peace-offering by which the new covenant is ratified. But now, the writer says, 'in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ' (ii. 16). This is

almost parallel to the great saying to the Corinthians, 'Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast' (1 Cor. v. 7, 8). Furthermore, the experienced fact of spiritual union with Christ is the assumption that governs the whole Epistle. The sphere in which the Apostle moves is Christ. 'In Christ Jesus' is the description of the believer's life and of the believer's universe. This again is a note that is struck continually in St. Paul's writings. The complete equality of the fellowship between Jews and Gentiles in Christ, to which allusion has already been made, is also a characteristic note of Pauline teaching.

All these great themes are presented to us as though they had secured general recognition. In the Epistle to the Galatians St. Paul contends for them with mingled argument, invective, and appeal; in the Epistle to the Romans he expounds them and presents a reasoned statement in their support. In the Epistle to the Ephesians they are all assumed, and the writer expatiates upon them. Does not this very fact suggest that the Epistle represents the coincidence between the completion of St. Paul's life-task and the culmination of his own spiritual experience? The serenity with which he enlarges upon these great themes, once so controversial, marks at once the completeness of his triumph over his adversaries and the full maturity of his own spiritual experience. It is true that another epistle of the captivity, the Epistle to the Philippians, does not suggest so full a triumph. 'Some, indeed,' the Apostle says, 'preach Christ,

even of envy and strife; thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds' (Phil. i. 15–17). Yet the stress of the battle was over by this time, and, as will be explained shortly, circumstances were present to the Apostle's mind that gave him a joyful assurance that the victory of his cause was complete Who could thus put the finishing touch upon the whole system of Pauline teaching, save the Apostle himself? Who could thus enjoy the victory in its complete fruition, save the great champion in the strife?

The themes are Pauline, but is the statement of them that of St. Paul himself? The argument so far has created a *prima facie* presumption in favour of his authorship. Before any final conclusion, however, can be reached it is necessary to examine the objections that may be urged against it. These concern the language, the governing conceptions, and the prevailing temper of the Epistle.

It is not needful to deal at large with the question of the language, for it has been frequently treated by other writers.

Perhaps all that is needful to say is that the style of any great writer shows wide variations according to his age and mood and subject. A writer may change his style and even vary his diction within very wide limits. Nothing, therefore, is more precarious than to draw a final conclusion either from mere verbal agreements or from verbal differences. Indeed, perhaps the presumption raised by differences of style and verbiage may

be to the opposite effect. A careful, to say nothing of a consummate, imitator, who wished his work to pass for that of St. Paul, would take some care to model his thought, but especially his style and choice of words, upon the genuine writings of the Apostle with which he was familiar. A marked divergence, therefore, in any of these respects is hardly compatible with the deliberate attempt to pass off a letter as St. Paul's that was not actually written by him.

More important, however, than the question of language and style is that of the governing conceptions of the Epistle. Some of these have already been touched upon in the attempt to show that the Epistle resumes and puts the finishing touches upon the great themes of St. Paul's teaching. But it is necessary to examine the matter more closely, and in particular to compare for this purpose the Epistle to the Ephesians with the four universally accepted Epistles of St. Paul, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans. When this is done, it at once becomes manifest that one great conception governs these former Epistles that is totally absent from the Epistle to the Ephesians. This subject is contained in the outstanding term righteousness. The righteousness of God and the way in which it is imputed to and conferred on believers in Christ is the main theme both of the Epistle to the Galatians and of the Epistle to the Romans. It occupies also a very prominent place in the Epistles to the Corinthians. It is upon these writings that the Apostle's position rests as the outstanding champion of justification

by faith. This conception of justification is totally absent from the Epistle to the Ephesians. Grace, indeed, is magnified and the experience of the forgiveness of sins is set forth, but the term righteousness and the cluster of words springing out of it are not employed. Instead, the whole emphasis is laid upon life, and salvation is treated as a quickening by which believers enter into the resurrection of Christ and share His risen life. In connexion with and in subordination to this governing conception salvation is portrayed under the conception of spiritual illumination.

The question to be answered is whether this striking divergence of the Epistle to the Ephesians from the universally recognized group of St. Paul's writings is really incompatible with his authorship. It would hardly appear to be so. If the four Epistles of this great group be examined, many important passages will be found that bring righteousness into the closest connexion with life, and thus bridge what at first sight appears to be a gulf between them and this Epistle. For example, the Epistle to the Galatians declares, 'For if there had been a law given *which could make alive*, verily righteousness would have been of the law' (Gal. iii. 21). Here the end of righteousness, looked upon as a gift conferred by God, is found in the impartation of life. In the great description of salvation given in Rom. v. and vi. the same connexion is found. Righteousness is imputed by faith, on the ground of the atoning death of Christ; but His death is also treated as the means by which the

reign of death is overcome and the reign of life substituted for it. 'For if,' St. Paul says, 'by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness *reign in life* though the one, even Jesus Christ' (Rom. v. 17). The end of grace is that 'as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign in righteousness *unto eternal life*, through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. v. 21).

So again, in Rom. viii. 10 the statement is made that 'the Spirit *is life*, because of righteousness.' And, once more, in 2 Cor. iii. 6 it is said that 'the letter killeth, but the Spirit *giveth life*,' this quickening ministration of the Spirit being also described as 'the ministration of righteousness' (2 Cor. iii. 9). It will be seen that in all these great passages righteousness is treated as the indispensable means of life, and is subordinated to life, the latter being understood in the highest and largest sense.

Does it seem impossible that at the later stage of his ministry, represented by the Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul should feel himself entitled to assume the condition and to expatiate upon the consequence? Especially does this seem natural when it is borne in mind that the Apostle is writing —not to Jews, for whom the problem of righteousness was the most pressing—but to Gentiles, for whom life was the great concern. The Mystery Religions which were clearly present to the mind of the writer were resorted to with the object of securing immortal life—conceived as a continual and blessed

personal existence. This Epistle presents God's 'mystery' as conferring eternal life, spiritually and ethically conditioned. This subject is dealt with later on.

The evident influence of the Mystery Religions is the most plausible argument against the Pauline authorship for those who exaggerate the influence of the Apostle's Judaistic prepossessions. But in opposition to their view it must be pointed out that there are equally clear suggestions of the Mysteries in St. Paul's undoubted Epistles. Further, the use that is made of them in this Epistle, as elsewhere, is to emphasize features of the gospel of Christ which have independent prominence throughout St. Paul's writings quite apart from this particular analogy. And once more, the writer's references show just that blending of sympathy with distinctiveness which accords naturally with an independent and higher standpoint. It is thus in striking agreement with the attitude taken up by St. Paul whenever he was brought into contact with the thought and practices of Gentile religions. This is the only striking difference in the presentation of the doctrine of salvation. In all other important features there is substantial agreement—not only between the general drift of this Epistle and that of the recognized writings of St. Paul, but even in the forms and figures that are employed. For example, the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians are remarkable, as we have already seen, for their lofty view of the Person of Christ and of His relation to the universe. But what resemblance could

possibly be closer than that between the doctrines of these two Epistles and the saying of 1 Cor. viii. 6, 'Yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things . . .; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through Him'?

A similarly close relation exists elsewhere between the great passage in this group of Epistles that deals with the humiliation and obedience of Christ, namely Phil. ii., and the outstanding statement in the Main Group. 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich' (2 Cor. viii. 9). Hence the Christological doctrine is absolutely identical in both groups of Epistles.

Further, it is to be noted that even the figures used in Ephesians to describe the spiritual relationships of believers are exactly the same as those to be found in the Main Group of the Epistles. The saying of 1 Cor. iii. 16, 'Know ye not that *ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*?' closely resembles that of Ephesians, 'In whom each several building, fitly framed together, *groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit*' (ii. 21, 22).

So also the figure of the body is used to illustrate the relationship of Christ to the Church. The Church is 'the body' of Christ throughout the Epistle to the Ephesians (see i. 23; iv. 12). So also in 1 Cor. xii. 12–27. In this last passage it is also significant

that there is a reference to the inclusion of Jews and Greeks in this 'one body.' Moreover, in 1 Corinthians participation in the Spirit is the mark and condition of this unity (1 Cor. xii. 13). Just so, after a reference to the 'one body' it is said in Eph. ii. 16–18, 'through Him we both have our access *in one Spirit* unto the Father.' It is true that at the outset of the Corinthian passage the body is said to be Christ, whereas in the Ephesians, Christ is the Head of the body. Yet the statement made to the Corinthians, 'Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof' (1 Cor. xii. 27), suggests, though it does not necessarily involve, the headship of Christ. Indeed, it is just this union of similarity with difference that suggests a common authorship. The similarity is striking; the difference suggests independence and not imitation. Again, the great passage, 2 Cor. i. 18–23, may be compared with Eph. i. 12. The reference in the former to 'the promise of God' corresponds with the description of Jewish Christians in the latter as those 'who before hoped in Christ.' The Corinthian passage declares that 'howsoever many be the promises of God, in Christ is the yea.' Eph. i. 10 speaks of the purpose of God, 'To sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth.' In 2 Cor. i. 21–22 mention is made of the establishing and anointing in Christ, of the sealing, the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. Exactly the same figures are used in Eph. i. 13–14. So again, in 2 Cor. v. 17–21 there is found the classic description of the new creation, of the reconciliation

accomplished through Christ and of the apostolic ambassadorship to the world that results. All this is the central teaching of Eph. ii. and iii., the only differences in the general conception being insignificant.

Enough has now been said to create a great presumption in favour of the Pauline authorship, if the remaining difficulties can be overcome. These difficulties, as has been seen, consist for the most part in the generality of the Epistle, in its sustained mood of exultant expatiation, and in the pronounced mysticism which has displaced all forensic analogies except that of adoption. How is all this to be accounted for?

There is an hypothesis based on critical examination that exactly solves the problem. The accepted text addresses the Epistle 'To the Saints that are in Ephesus' (i. 1). But the words 'in Ephesus' are wanting in many of the manuscripts. Now, there is a reference in Colossians to an Epistle to the Laodiceans that has not been preserved under that name, which must clearly have been written about the same time and under the same conditions as that to the Colossian Church—'And when this Epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the Epistle from Laodicea' (Col. iv. 16). This exchange of letters in itself suggests the idea of circulation. Moreover, the Apostle appears to be writing to believers with whom he had no personal acquaintance. He mentions '*having heard* of the faith in the Lord

Jesus Christ which is among you and which ye showed towards all the saints' (i. 15).

Added to this, there is a tradition that St. Paul actually sent a circular letter to these Churches of Asia Minor. The overwhelming probability, therefore, is that this Epistle is identical with that to the Laodiceans; that it was a circular letter intended for a group of Churches in which both Laodicea and Ephesus were included; and that being preserved in the metropolitan church of Ephesus it came to be called by its name. All this put together explains both the intrinsic features of our Epistle and its special affinities with the Epistle to the Colossians so as exactly to clear up the situation.

To begin with, it explains why there are no personal greetings or detailed instructions. In the next place, it gives a sufficient reason for the spirit of boundless satisfaction and expectation that breathes throughout the Epistle. Moreover, it shows how the inmost springs of St. Paul's spirit had been touched. In Philippians the Apostle gives utterance to the deepest mystical experience of union, nay even identification, with Christ—'For me to live is Christ' (Phil. i. 21). Later on he declares his intensest aspiration to be 'that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead' (Phil. iii. 10, 11). In this exultant fellowship the Apostle hears of the independent spread of the

gospel and of the growth of the Church in places that he has never visited and among people whom he has never known. After all the conflict and baffling experiences of his life he sees how the word of God ' runs and is glorified ' (2 Thess. iii. 1). The news brings to him an exultant sense of the sovereignty of Christ, who is manifestly filling all things. His magnanimous heart is stirred by no doubts or fears. He is not anxious to set in order Churches that he has only indirectly founded, but assumes the truth of all that has been repeated to him. Everything that is highest and most generous in his hopes is set free. What wonder that under these conditions he passes joyfully from controversy and exposition to thanksgiving and expatiation! What wonder that his treatment of the gospel becomes more universal in its spirit than ever and throws off all the harsher and more Judaic elements sometimes to be found in his earlier writings! What wonder that in these circumstances the highest, deepest, and largest elements of his teaching elsewhere receive full and final expression, untrammelled by any limiting conditions, by any need of precise argumentation in their treatment, or of any hampering need either to correct errors or to deal with practical affairs! It is well to be brought thus to realize that St. Paul's teaching represents, as in the case of any other great saint and thinker, a living development. Its ripest and fullest statement is at the end. That end can only be fully understood in its organic connexion with what has gone before. The perception of this fact deepens

interest, both in the man and in his message. It at once rebuts many of the objections brought against his teaching, just as it protects him against the hard narrowness and literalism with which he has been too often interpreted as the result of a rigidly mechanical doctrine of inspiration. His teaching must be studied as a whole and especially in the light of this Epistle, which gathers together all that has gone before, giving effect to it in a final restatement that brings into relief its central features, and irradiates them with the splendour of a faith that has attained its full maturity through a long life of fellowship with Christ, in prayer, and suffering, and labour. Thus the close examination of the Epistle and of all the facts that are available justify the unhesitating conclusion that St. Paul was its author and that no other man could possibly have written it.

CHAPTER III

THE THEME AND ITS TREATMENT

WHAT is the subject of the Epistle to the Ephesians? This question is not altogether easy to answer. It is not always easy in respect to the other Epistles of St. Paul. The Christian faith is so comprehensive, the possibilities of error, whether in the apprehension or the application of it, are so numerous, that all the main Epistles of St. Paul traverse wellnigh the whole realm of Christian faith and conduct. It is true that certain subjects emerge with unique prominence in particular Epistles. For example, the Second Advent in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, justification by faith in the Epistles to the Galatians and Romans, questions affecting the *ethos* of the Church in the Epistles to the Corinthians, the Person of Christ in the Epistle to the Colossians, the inmost law of Christian experience and endeavour in the Epistle to the Philippians. But two Epistles—the Epistle to the Romans and the Epistle to the Ephesians—stand out from the rest by the vastness of their survey of Christian truth and life. In respect to this comprehensiveness, however, there is a great distinction between these two greatest masterpieces

of St. Paul. The Epistle to the Romans is a systematic exposition. It opens with a magnificent declaration of 'the righteousness of God,' which is 'from faith unto faith.' From that vantage-ground it surveys, first of all, the condition of mankind, and then the whole work of Christ as the remedy for universal sin and its consequences. But the Epistle to the Ephesians is not an ordered exposition. Rather it is an expatiation. It resembles a great musical composition in the treatment of its theme. Fresh movements enter at every paragraph, developing the meaning of the great theme, which recurs again and again with an insistence that is combined with endless variety and is enriched by every element that has been added. Or the Epistle may be compared to a river that is continually fed by new tributaries so that it flows with ever-increasing depth and breadth into the ocean of infinity. Or again, the prospect set before us in the Epistles to the Romans and the Ephesians may be compared to a far-reaching landscape as seen from a mountain summit in the clear definition of noonday and in the gorgeous indistinctness of the setting sun. The outline in both cases is the same. Those who desire to construct an exact map, whether of physical geography or of biblical theology, will avail themselves of the noonday clearness. On the other hand, those who seek the poetic inspiration, whether of the landscape or of the faith, with its subtle appeal to thoughts that lie too deep for words and desires that are too vast for precise expression, will rejoice in the splendour of

the sunset. To return to the earlier illustrations which have suggested the growing enrichment of the theme as the subject is unfolded, the Epistle opens by setting before its readers the 'eternal purpose' of the Father, and by magnifying His grace in its fulfilment (i. 3–6). Thence it proceeds to define the purpose as made completely manifest in its fulfilment. It consists in the 'adoption of sons' as the outcome of a supreme work of redemption (i. 7 et seq.). Throughout, the Epistle treats Christ as the sphere and instrument in and by whom this redemptive purpose is carried out. From this threefold beginning—the eternal purpose, its manifestation in redemptive grace, its accomplishment in Christ Jesus—the Apostle proceeds to unfold the meaning and possibilities of the Christian life as a quickening received in Christ through redemption, as including both reconciliation and resurrection (ii. 1–10). The consideration of this experience, which has become common both to Jew and Gentile, leads naturally to the subject of the Catholic fellowship in Christ (ii. 11–22). With this is bound up St. Paul's own apostolic ministry, the object of which is 'to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things' (iii. 9). From this point the Apostle naturally passes to the spiritual order and the moral standards of the Christian community (iv. 1–v. 21). He pursues this subject in its application to all the relationships in which Christians stand, not only within the Church itself, but in the sphere of ordinary

and especially domestic life (v. 22–vi. 9). The Epistle closes with an account of the great spiritual conflict by which alone can the integrity of life in Christ be preserved (vi. 10–20).

Is it possible to gather all this up into a unity? Perhaps the whole may be summed up as a setting forth of life in Christ, as the spiritual realm in which God's gracious purpose is accomplished and man's redemption is enjoyed. The foundations of this spiritual world, its inexhaustible possibilities, its moral and social implications, are all dealt with as essentially bound up with its fundamental nature and meaning. In this spiritual realm—the only true world—is to be found the complete satisfaction of all the spiritual possibilities of human nature. Yet this blessedness of ever-growing fulfilment and satisfaction is based upon the reconstitution of man's relationship with God. Redemption, adoption, quickening, reconciliation are the terms successively used to describe this reconstitution in Christ. While, however, the Epistle enlarges upon the blessedness conferred upon and enjoyed by man in Christ, its centre is to be found, not in man, but in God. Christ as the realm in which redemption and blessedness are enjoyed is not exclusive of God. On the contrary, God may be said to be the positive and entire content of Christ—God revealed as Holy Father, the Sovereign Source of grace, the Redeemer and spiritual end of man and of the universe. Life in Christ therefore is centred in God, and is the only home of true being and well-being. This life in Christ is shown not only in its divine and human,

but also in its world relationships, for in Christ the meaning and destiny of the entire universe are revealed by a central and all-pervading illumination.

If all this be carefully borne in mind, the central phrase of the Epistle may truly be said to be 'in Christ Jesus' (ii. 13). The revelation and history of the past, the experience of the present, the prospects of the future, are gathered up and unified in this great expression. And if this be the central phrase, God in Christ Jesus may be said to be the central theme of the Epistle. Its survey extends to the entire meaning and purpose of the universe and of history; but always as grounded in 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' and proceeding from Him.

As has already been said, the Epistle to the Ephesians is an expatiation rather than an exposition. Even the most careless reader must be struck by the exuberance of its language. Yet this is not the disguise of emptiness or a sign of emotion, but is in keeping with the deep and illimitable spiritual experience that finds expression in it. At every point we are met with a threefold infinity. First of all, there is the infinity of the grace of God, made manifest in Christ. This is the source of the eternal purpose of divine Sovereignty which orders the universe and its history to the summing up of all things in Christ. Then, secondly, there is the infinity of range in the destination of the universe for the triumphant Headship of Christ. The sphere of grace already includes both Jew and Gentile. It extends beyond the experience of individuals to

the fellowship of the Church as a whole. Again, the fellowship of the Church contains within itself the promise of the inclusion of all mankind in the enjoyment of redemption. Yet even mankind is too narrow in its range for the purpose of God and the Sovereignty of Christ; for the Apostle declares that the revelation of the Mystery of Christ is 'to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God' (iii. 10). All this and more is gathered together and expressed in the great announcement that the divine purpose is 'to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth' (i. 10). In the third place this infinity of range is accompanied by a corresponding infinity of content. Extension and intension are equal, and both are boundless. The Apostle prays that his readers 'may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they may be filled unto all the fullness of God' (iii. 18, 19).

The perfect blending of all these elements—namely, the divine grace, the ultimate range of its triumph, and the unsearchable riches of its experience—is the most distinctive mark of the Epistle. The three are brought together in the great declaration about the apostolic ministry which has already been referred to. The Apostle's commission and his ceaseless endeavour are to 'preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ' and to 'make all men see what is the dispensation of the

mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things ' (iii. 8, 9). The first part of the verse sets forth the inexplorable and therefore inexhaustible [1] riches of Christ, the range of the apostolic preaching and its universal applicability. But the figure used by the Apostle in the latter part of the quotation, ' the dispensation of the Mystery,' and the declaration that it has hitherto been hid in the infinite depths of the divine Creator of the universe, suggests a most precious, and as the Epistle proceeds to show, an inexhaustible secret contained in Christ.

This union of ' breadth and length and height and depth ' in a select and rare experience that is yet potentially universal is the most distinctive feature of the Epistle. The effect of the sense of infinity thus pervading the Epistle is heightened by the fact that it finds expression throughout in prayer which sways between exuberant thanksgiving and confident intercession. The whole of the first paragraph opens with and is governed by an ascription of praise to God—' Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ ' (i. 3–14). The next paragraph starts with the declaration that the Apostle ' ceases not to give thanks for his readers, making mention of them in his prayers ' (i. 15, 16). This is followed by the sublime statement of the object of his prayers that fills the rest

[1] The word *ἀνεξιχνίαστον* in the original suggests that the riches of Christ are so infinite, that they are pathless (' trackless,' Weymouth), and, therefore, cannot be explored.

of the first chapter. The exposition that follows arises naturally out of the statement of the scope of the Apostle's prayer that has gone before (ii. 1–iii. 13). When it is completed, the Apostle passes again into the attitude and spirit of prayer. 'For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named,' &c. (iii. 14, 15). This great prayer ends with an ascription of praise to God as 'able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think' (iii. 20, 21). Thus, the whole of the expository part of the Epistle grows out of and returns to prayer. The remainder of the Epistle is practical and exhortatory. Here, therefore, the mode by which the Apostle's teaching is conveyed becomes different. But the main body of the Epistle is dictated by the Apostle's vivid realization of the grace of God made manifest in Christ, of what it has done already in the case of believers, of the untold blessings which remain to be experienced by them and to be extended to mankind. The Apostle moves in a world of spiritual satisfaction, which grows from more to more without any possibility of exhaustion. This world of blessedness is apprehended by his mind, but still more, it arouses all the emotions of his heart and all the aspirations of his spirit. In a word, it is realized by a vivid, steadfast, and comprehensive faith, which calls all the energies of his personality into full and harmonious activity. Hence the exuberance of St. Paul's language. This is most noticeable in the constant recurrence of the words 'riches' and 'abundance.' The former word ap-

pears again and again. The Apostle speaks of ' the riches of His grace ' (i. 8), ' the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints ' (i. 18), ' God being rich in mercy ' (ii. 4), ' the exceeding riches of His grace ' (ii. 7), ' the unsearchable riches of Christ ' (iii. 8), ' the riches of His glory ' (iii. 16), ' the riches of His grace which He made to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence ' (i. 8).

The constant recurrence of this conception of riches is contained in sentences that expand into almost overwhelming paragraphs, in which the Apostle sets forth the infinity of God's grace, the infinite supply of His gifts, and the corresponding infinity of satisfaction that is experienced in Christ. Yet, despite the recurrence of these expressions and the way in which St. Paul strains the resources of language to give expression to his sense of the immeasurable gifts and resources of God in Christ, the order, balance, and judgement of his treatment are equally remarkable. There is nothing extravagant, either in the language or in the thought that it expresses. Again and again the Apostle shows that the wonder of the experience already enjoyed by the saints and the infinite prospects that stretch out before them are in truest accord with reason when the character of their source is taken into account. The words ' according to ' are emphatic on this point. Three times they are used with decisive meaning. First of all in i. 7, ' according to the riches of His grace.' Next in i. 19, 'according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the

dead,' &c. And again in iii. 16, 'according to the riches of His glory.' There is a congruous, though less important, use of the words in i. 5, 'according to the good pleasure of His will,' and i. 9, 'according to His good pleasure.' These expressions go to show that for St. Paul the vast world of privilege and prospect which is opened up in his experience and expectation in Christ, while inconceivable from the natural point of view, arises as a divine commonplace out of the glory of God's character and the transcendent revelation of His purpose in Christ.

Everything turns upon the doctrine of God, the completed Fact of Christ, the experienced reality of the Spirit. But when these three governing factors are taken into account, then the unbounded expectations which shape the Apostle's forecast, so far from being excessive, are only in keeping with the revelation of grace, glory, and power that has been made in Christ. With such a God as is revealed in Christ, such a salvation as is experienced in Christ with its infinite and eternal promise becomes a matter of course. Not it, but anything that falls short of it, is unthinkable.

A human analogy may help to explain the combination of enraptured wonder and reasoned expectation to which the Epistle gives such sustained expression. There are men who rise so greatly to new opportunities calling for a consummate display of ability or of goodness that they fill their fellows with wondering admiration. Much had been revealed of their greatness or goodness beforehand, but the new opportunity has enabled them to create new

standards for themselves and henceforth for men's judgement of them. Yet, when they have so acted as to surpass all the records of their previous excellences, it is seen that their new achievements have been in line with their previous performances. Hence an enlarged conception of their character and power is formed which makes both their past record and the standard of future expectation set up by them to be 'according to' the self-revelation by which they have transcended their highest hitherto in yet greater triumphs. Now, this conception of excellence surpassed runs through the Epistle to the Ephesians.[1] The Apostle has passed from the twilight of the preparatory dispensation into the splendour of Christ and of life in Him. The excellences of the past have been transcended by a revelation of divine grace, glory, and power that go immeasurably beyond all the expectations hitherto formed by the Apostle. Hence the exuberant apprehension of 'the unsearchable riches' of God and of Christ. Yet when the revelation has been made and experienced, it forms the climax of an ordered whole. It is not unaccountable or unbelievable. It is not an act that is unprepared for by the past or that can be imagined to end without producing a yet more glorious consummation in the future. It takes its place in the great process of divine self-revelation. It creates new standards of faith and hope. It is in this way that the perfect blending of exuberance and measure that pervades the Epistle is to be explained.

[1] It is strikingly expressed in iii. 20.

This spiritual realization of the meaning and method of the gospel is of the greatest importance for the study of the New Testament theology in general and of the Pauline theology in particular. The opposing contentions of those who magnify the Apocalyptic elements of the New Testament on the one hand, and those who insist on its more strictly spiritual teaching on the other, are by this time familiar. Stating the bare antithesis, the problem to be solved is whether the kingdom of God, as described by Christ, is to be conceived as a final order of things to be introduced miraculously by God, or whether it is already so truly a spiritual reality that its final triumph is to be expected as the end of a process that is even now going on. Is the life of faith, as we know it, only provisional and preparatory to the kingdom, or is the kingdom already implicit in and anticipated by faith? This is the problem which confronts those who study the teachings of Christ as reported in the Gospel, and arises also in regard to the teachings of St. Paul. In the Epistle to the Thessalonians, the earliest of his writings that have been preserved, the main subject of interest is the Second Coming of Christ, the Parousia. The First Epistle declares that 'the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God' (1 Thess. iv. 16); 'the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night' (v. 2).

In the Second Epistle St. Paul corrects any misunderstanding of this teaching. No man is to beguile the Thessalonians into believing that 'the

day of the Lord is now present.' It cannot come 'except the falling away come first and the man of sin be revealed' (2 Thess. ii. 3). Even this warning, however, rather emphasizes than sets aside the Apocalyptic element in the Apostle's teaching.

In the Main Group of Epistles, consisting of Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans, the Apocalyptic element is present, but less strongly marked. It does not appear at all in the Epistle to the Galatians, which is concerned almost exclusively with the nature, the ground, and the spiritual consequences of justification. It is little more than suggested in the Epistle to the Romans, as, for example, in the reference to 'the day when God shall reveal the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ' (Rom. ii. 16). But it is prominent in 1 Corinthians, where we are reminded of 'the day' when every man's work shall be proved by fire (1 Cor. iii. 13). Still more strikingly the Corinthians are told that 'the time is shortened, that henceforth both those that have wives may be as though they had none; and those that weep, as though they wept not; and those that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and those that buy, as though they possessed not; and those that use the world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away' (1 Cor. vii. 29–31). And in chap. xv. occurs the great passage: 'Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we

shall be changed' (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52). Thus, in these passages St. Paul teaches his readers to expect a personal return of Christ, and a total reconstruction of the order of things as the result. He also appears to imply that this appearance is at hand, that it will be sudden, and that the transformation of all things will be brought about by one swift and decisive act. The Apostle does not expressly return to the subject in the Second Epistle, although his statement that 'we must all be made manifest before the judgement seat of Christ' (2 Cor. v. 10) is undoubtedly to be understood not in the sense of a private judgement of each individual after death, but of a general appearance before Christ at the last day.

At first sight the Epistle to the Ephesians seems to represent the subject in an altogether different way. Though there is a single reference to 'the day of redemption' (iv. 30), there is no mention of any personal appearance of Christ. Still less is there anything in the Epistle taken by itself to suggest a sudden catastrophe happening to all things by the forth-putting of divine power. The Epistle seems to depict throughout a great spiritual process already in full course, by which the eternal purpose of God is being wrought out to its ultimate consequences for the universe as a whole and for mankind in particular. The central fact of history is the completed and glorified life of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose history is thus described: 'Now this, He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the

heavens, that He might fill all things' (iv. 9, 10). Thus already the spiritual presence and activity of Christ are universal. To this universal sovereignty and ceaseless activity the goal of the world's history is seen to correspond. The good pleasure of God which He purposed in Christ is 'to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth' (i. 10). This implies a spiritual transformation by which the authority and mind of Christ are so fully impressed upon all things, both severally and as forming a consistent order, that throughout the whole creation the Fatherly glory of God, as already revealed in Christ, is made completely manifest in an answering conformity to it.

Furthermore, the world-renewing power which works in Christ to this universal end has been already put forth in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. What is taking place in history is not only in keeping with the resurrection, but is a continued manifestation of the self-same divine power that has been already made manifest in that historic event. The Apostle prays that believers may know what is 'the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and He put all things in subjection under His feet,

and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all' (i. 19–23). Hence, the Church already belongs to a supernatural order of things. The life of Christ and that of the Church are continuous; the Church fulfilling and expressing on earth the triumphant life of its Lord in heaven. Therefore a quickening process is already taking place in the hearts and lives of men which stands in essential relation to the transformation of the world. The process that began with the resurrection of Christ and in the redemption of His people, if carried out to its ultimate consequences, means the summing up of all things in Christ. Already the exalted Christ is a world-filling and transforming Presence.

The signs and result of this fact are to be seen in the life and ministry of the Church. 'Unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ' (iv. 7). Such is the general view of the redemptive work of Christ presented in the Epistle. Christ already presides over and fills the universe, the power of His resurrection has already been manifested in it, the spiritual life of the Church is its continuous and growing result and the transformation of the universe its final end.

Yet these vast conceptions which embrace the universe and suggest the orderly working of great spiritual processes do not for a moment shut out the marked and tender personal relations in which St. Paul stands to Christ. Assuming, as is justifiable, that the Epistle to the Philippians was written about

the same time, it is most instructive to set side by side with the infinite prospects of the Epistle to the Ephesians the whole description of our Lord's exaltation and of the intimate personal relations in which He stands to believers, as it is set before us in the Philippians.

The very fact that both these Epistles came from St. Paul at the same stage of his spiritual history, or thereabouts, shows that for the Apostle there was no incompatibility between the view of the redemptive work of Christ, which conceives it as a gradual process carried on throughout the universe, and the view of it which emphasizes the directly personal agency of Christ. If this be true, it applies in great measure to the more pronounced apocalyptic teaching of the early Epistles. In broad outline this Epistle corresponds, for example, to Rom. viii., where the world-renewing process of redemption is traced in its advance from the spiritual life of believers made free from the law of sin and death, and receiving the Spirit of Christ, till it extends to the deliverance of the creation itself, 'from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God' (Rom. viii. 21). It is clear, therefore, that for St. Paul the Parousia of Christ and the world-embracing processes of redemption are not incompatible one with the other. His statements about the Parousia must be read in the light of such teaching as that of our Epistle and of Rom. viii.

The teaching on this subject is an example of the prophetic foreshortening of which there are so many instances in the Old Testament and notably in the

Messianic prophecies of Isaiah. Such foreshortening arises from the vivid intuitions of faith which naturally present divine events as immediately impending. Such anticipation must needs also concentrate attention exclusively on the personal and sovereign will which in a moment of time and by a decisive deed accomplishes its purpose in history. In this Epistle St. Paul has apparently passed to the larger apprehension of a spiritual and a world-embracing process which accomplishes the divine purpose by means of ordered stages, and by a harmonious cooperation of many subordinate forces whose prescribed working is in obedience to the exalted Christ who fills all things. Yet let it not be supposed for a moment that this enlargement is in the slightest decree incompatible with any of the essential elements of what is known as the Apocalyptic point of view. The latter magnifies the personal activity of God—His decisive will and almighty power. In correspondence with this is the final and complete consummation which includes both judgement and redemptive transformation. Mature reflection does not affect the substance of this revelation and belief as to the instant and decisive activity of God. It simply throws light upon the methods by which the divine will, active throughout, brings about this final consummation. Neither of these two points of view, the Apocalyptic or the spiritual, can be understood without reference to the other.

If all this be so, it may be remarked in passing that the same principle of interpretation will apply to our Lord's teaching in the Gospels, where exactly

the same two strands are interwoven. In St. Paul's mind the Apocalyptic and the spiritual are combined from the first. But the steady development of this thought shows that the Apocalyptic—in its method and effectuating power—must be interpreted by the spiritual as it is finally conceived in the Epistle to the Ephesians. In the same way should our Lord's teaching be dealt with. Moreover, the presence of the two elements in St. Paul gives an assurance that our Lord's teaching could not have borne the crude Apocalyptic meaning that one-sided critics like Schweitzer fasten upon Him. For had that been the case, the Apostle Paul must have broken free from so narrow and impracticable a Christ, just as the depth and breadth of his own spiritual experience pass beyond the narrow limitations of a merely external and miraculous Apocalyptic expectation. Hence the appearing of Christ must be treated, not as a merely miraculous act out of connexion with the spiritual order and development of redemption, but as prepared for by the infinite and spiritual power already present in the Gospels, which works itself out in ever wider spheres through the influence of the Spirit of Christ. A marked feature of this Epistle is the way in which, starting from the inmost experience of redemption in its quickening power, it presents this process as becoming universal and as proceeding to its final goal in all the sublime majesty of irresistible yet spiritual power.

Hence, to conclude, the theme of the Epistle to the Ephesians is 'God in Christ Jesus' as the sub-

ject and source of the eternal purpose of grace and redemption, which is wrought out to its final and universal consequences by a principle and power that are revealed in Christ the Son, crucified, risen, and ascended, as He is experienced in the Spirit.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION OF GOD

So far the general scope of the Epistle and the spirit that pervades it have been passed in review. The question of its dominant subject must now be more precisely considered. In the previous chapter it was affirmed that the supreme subject of the Epistle to the Ephesians is the Christian Doctrine of God, or rather the Revelation of God in Christ Jesus. This statement may at first be questioned, and it may be suggested that St. Paul gives the central place to the Catholic Commonwealth and to his own apostolic commission in regard to it, 'To preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things' (iii. 8, 9). The central theme of the Epistle is undoubtedly the Mystery of Christ which is now revealed, and the Apostle's object is to unfold the meaning and universal significance of this mystery. Yet the Apostle explains that the Mystery 'hath been hid *in God who created all things*.' Hence it may safely be concluded, even from this expression, that Christ is not only the Secret, belonging to God which is

told ' in the fullness of the times,' but that He is the Secret in which is conveyed the full revelation of God. He reveals the depths of the Divine Being in whom He has been hidden, by completing, redeeming, and transforming the creation over which He assumes the headship, and of which He is the predestined end. Hence, as will be seen more clearly later on, there is for the Apostle no complete doctrine of God apart from His self-revelation in Christ.

Moreover, the doctrine of God is not in word only. It does not consist merely in authoritative texts or even in religious ascriptions of praise and worship. For the Epistle to the Ephesians, for St. Paul generally, and indeed for all the writings, both of the Old and of the New Testament, the name and nature of God are revealed in His saving deeds. He is as He speaks and acts, bringing about thereby great spiritual effects in the life and experience of those to whom He thus manifests Himself. The sum of this self-manifestation in word and deed is gathered up and expressed in His Name. Therefore, His Name, which is the equivalent of His self-manifestation, becomes the rational foundation upon which faith and hope build their confident assurance. Hence the Name of God is both the goal and the starting-point. This is the case with the successive stages of the Old Testament revelation. The Name of God changes, or its interpretation is enlarged and deepened, according to the growing experience of His ways and works. An outstanding and final example of this correspondence between the self-manifestation of God and His Name is to be found

in this Epistle. Here is given the latest and completest description of the self-manifestation of God in Christ Jesus, effecting the redemption and eternal blessedness of man. As in the Old Testament, so here, His Name corresponds with this completed self-manifestation. It gathers up and expresses the whole result. It then becomes the presupposition upon which the whole of His nature and action is explained. It supplies the material from which we derive our forecast of the future of man and of the universe. Read in this light, the Epistle to the Ephesians shows clearly that the whole revelation of God in Christ culminates in the full disclosure of His Fatherhood, so that His Fatherhood becomes the key to, and may be treated as the final cause of, all His dealings in creating, sustaining, and redeeming the world.

A series of governing passages may at once be quoted, bringing all this into full relief. The Epistle opens with the salutation of 'grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (i. 2). The next verse contains an ascription of praise to 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.' The Apostle goes on to address his prayers 'to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory' (i. 17). In more general terms he declares that through Jesus Christ 'we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father' (iii. 18). Later on again, he says, 'I bow my knees unto the Father from whom every family [or fatherhood] in heaven and

on earth is named' (iii. 14, 15). In summing up the belief of the Church he speaks of 'one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all' (iv. 6). These are not merely casual expressions; they are the most distinctive and decisive statements of the Epistle, and must therefore be examined in detail.

I. *Ephesians* i. 2. '*God our Father.*' This is, indeed, the usual salutation with which St. Paul's Epistles begin. It is to be found in Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Colossians, and Philippians. In the Epistle to the Galatians and the two to the Thessalonians, St. Paul speaks of God 'the Father,' but the Epistle to the Galatians almost immediately adds a reference to the will of 'our God and Father.'

Hence, this characteristic salutation sets Fatherhood in the forefront as the characteristic relationship in which God stands to believers in Christ. Coupled always with the reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, it suggests that the distinctive gift which is bestowed upon believers by Christ is the enjoyment of the Fatherhood of God in the experience of being His sons. Hence, the experimental and personal note is sounded first of all. The doctrine of the Apostle is not the result of an argument, nor is it the expression of a shallow and optimistic theology. It is certainly not exhausted by, nor does it at first concern itself with, the general Fatherhood of God in creation. Such a Fatherhood, in so far as it exists, is rather the inference from the deep experience of believers than the ground of this experience. Still less is creative benevolence the measure of

what is meant by the Divine Fatherhood. A penetrating, uplifting, and satisfying experience of the Fatherhood of God as a supremely spiritual and personal relationship is the Apostle's starting-point here and everywhere else. Every spiritual faculty takes its part in receiving, verifying, and giving expression to this experience.

There is no need to amplify a description of what is contained in the Fatherhood of God as experienced by believers. In a very real sense the whole of this Epistle is only a description of the Fatherhood of God, in its grace and purpose, its gift and promise. All this awaits examination. Yet the whole content of redemption and blessedness experienced, proceeds from and is gathered up into the Divine Fatherhood. Thus 'God our Father' stands for sovereign and condescending Love. While embracing the universe in the range of His Fatherly wisdom and sovereign care, He comes into personal and most intimate fellowship of life and love with those who, by adoption, enter His family. For such life has become the reception of and the response to a sovereign and creative love which finds, satisfies, and sustains the individual heart by a gracious self-disclosure, that if universal in its meaning is yet specially adapted to each individual case.

Furthermore, the experience of the Divine Fatherhood, thus intimately personal and inwardly transforming, becomes the ground of a new spiritual fellowship. 'God our Father' is the Father of the collective body of Christian believers. He is not less the Father of each one of them because He is in

such wise the Father of them all as to constitute the spiritual bond of their unity and the motive of their fellowship. The Apostle's starting-point is, therefore, that of a personal, yet social, experience which is marked by such catholicity and expansiveness that it has already embraced both Jew and Gentile, and will eventually come to embrace mankind.

This experience of 'God our Father' stands revealed as the climax and the ultimate explanation of all religion. It is the vital end which by its fulfilment explains, not only the starting-point and the course, but also the aberrations that have gone before. In this experience is contained the standard by which the worth alike of religion, of the universe, and of history must be tried. Strictly speaking, the reception and spread of this experience may not, taken by themselves, be evidence of its truth. Yet it alone has such transcendent and abiding value as to make either human life or the universe with which human life is bound up worth while. Thus the presumption is all in its favour for those who believe that the universe is constituted in truth and that man can only be satisfied in apprehending truth. At least this much may be said at once, that the fact that this experience has come into triumphant existence in this world is sufficient to suggest either that the apparent contradictions of Fatherly love to be found in the order of things do not reach to the inmost, or that God has acted decisively to overcome them. Perhaps both may turn out to be true; the former because of the latter.

Equally this experience holds out the only hope of eventual catholicity. It reveals a new and vital order, founded in love and not in mere authority and power. In this experience individuals are differentiated, and yet are bound together in a most intimate society by a transcendent relationship which respects, strengthens, and binds together both the individual and the social interests of life. Men gain unity and fellowship on the highest and not the lowest terms. And not on their own highest terms taken in themselves, if that were possible. Their highest is but a response to a Higher than themselves. 'God our Father' is the bond of fellowship because in Him transcendent Love, personal and sovereign, has fulfilled its Fatherhood by becoming immanent and saving.

II. *Ephesians* i. 3.—But the Apostle passes from the experimental realization of the Divine Fatherhood of believers in Christ to the higher and larger statement that God is 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' This description occurs elsewhere. Hence, the testimony of personal and collective experience in the Church to the Fatherhood of God rests upon and springs out of a more authoritative revelation in which is contained a far ampler disclosure of what this Fatherhood means. The Fatherhood of God which the Apostle sets forth is first and foremost His Fatherhood towards our Lord Jesus Christ. It is in the relationship of the Father to 'the Son of His love' (Col. i. 13), to 'the Beloved,' as He is called in this Epistle (i. 6), that the Fatherhood of God has its eternal

ground and its complete expression. Nay more, it is in the history of our Lord Jesus Christ that the Fatherhood of God reveals the full scope of its purpose and power, and has received its standing and decisive verification. The primary ground of belief in His Fatherhood does not consist in the subjective experience of men, even though this experience be shared by the whole community of the Church. It rests upon the convincing authority of an objective revelation made to us in Christ. St. Paul re-echoes the great statement of our Lord, 'No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me' (John xiv. 6; see also Matt. xi. 27).

Moreover, this resting of the truth upon the authority of revelation is not the whole of the matter. It is true that St. Paul nowhere expresses himself quite so fully as to the eternal relations between the Father and the Son as does St. John in the Prologue to his Gospel, or as does the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in his great statement that the Son is 'the effulgence of God's glory, and the very image of His substance' (Heb. i. 3). Yet, in the two expressions just quoted (namely, 'the Beloved' and 'the Son of His love') St. Paul emphasizes in an even more striking way those relations of love between the Father and the Son, which make the latter, not so much the Word of the Father's mind or the manifestation of the Father's nature, as the partner of the Father's life and fellowship and purpose. Hence, though St. Paul never supplies a metaphysical doctrine of the Trinity, yet he does so conceive of the eternal relations of the

Father and the Son as to ground the love that can only belong to perfect Fatherhood deep in the eternal and inmost secret of the divine essence and nature. The Fatherhood which becomes manifest in the experience of God's adopted sons rests upon and proceeds out of an eternal fact of the divine life, which guarantees that God has been at no time and can be in no relationship whatever a loveless or unfatherly Being. His Fatherhood lies at the source of all His self-manifestation. His Godhead over the whole creation only comes into being because of His love. The object, the expression, the agent of this love, St. Paul finds in the Son. All things are created through and for the Son (Col. i. 16). Hence their Sonship is grounded in Him, is derived from and rests upon their relationship to the Son.

In addition to this, the Fatherhood of God is primarily towards our Lord Jesus Christ because, according to the Apostle's unwavering doctrine, the sin and guilt of man have so alienated him from the life of God that his Sonship is that of adoption by grace and not of enjoyment by nature. Between the two great sayings 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' and 'God our Father' lies the whole of St. Paul's doctrine of atonement and redemption. Hence, the great expression now under consideration does not merely mean that our Lord Jesus Christ was the first to reveal in any complete way the Fatherhood of God, or that our belief in it rests upon His authority. It means further that the Fatherhood of God is originally realized only in 'the Son of His love,' and that men participate

in it only in and through their relationship to Christ.

At first sight this may seem to restrict the Fatherhood of God by limitations which fetter its sovereignty and dim the splendour of its generosity. To ground our Sonship in Christ may appear to destroy the immediacy of the relationship to the Father by interposing Another of whom there is no universal experience. A divine act of adoption may be deemed arbitrary and artificial. The special points raised in the last two objections must be considered later on. But the general impression thus conveyed, and in particular the supposition that St. Paul's doctrine limits or obscures the Fatherhood of God, rests upon a total misunderstanding of his teaching. Indeed, the precise opposite is the truth. The Fatherhood of God is so supreme and so urgent in His character and motive that it must needs claim sons for the most personal and intimate fellowship of love. Such fellowship can only be in that which is most distinctive of the Divine Father—namely, His holy perfection. In this sense the Fatherhood of God must be His special relationship towards those who are brought into complete spiritual union with Him and thereby become partakers of His holiness. Yet equally there is a universal quality in His Fatherhood. This is to be found in the gracious purpose of love which determines God to bring this filial fellowship with Himself within the reach of all men, to prepare them for its enjoyment, and to destroy, by His gift of redemption, the hindrances that prevent its

realization. This essential Fatherhood, St. Paul teaches, is realized in and towards the Son, and by Him made available in its highest meaning for all men.

In the next place, this definition of the Divine Fatherhood is intended to convey that the Fatherhood of God is completely expressed only in and towards our Lord Jesus Christ. To begin with, His consciousness alone is sufficiently high and deep, His spirit alone is sufficiently pure, and His life in God sufficiently intimate to enable Him to apprehend and to set forth the entire meaning of the Divine Fatherhood. He alone can receive and reflect the full radiance of its glory. The goal of Christian experience, still infinitely distant, is to arrive at the knowledge of the Father, which our Lord Jesus Christ has enjoyed from the beginning.

Further, the life-experience of our Lord is alone sufficient to make full proof of the Divine Fatherhood in all the plenitude of its resources and the blessedness of its fellowship. When St. Paul speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ he is not thinking merely or mainly of the Prophet of Galilee and Jerusalem. Before his eyes, as this Epistle shows, is the vision of the Son who 'descended into the lower parts of the earth' (iv. 9). The life which began in this progressive act of complete self-surrender, culminating in the obedience of the Cross and the descent to the realms of the dead, is consummated in the resurrection-glory of the Son and in His exaltation 'far above all the heavens that He might fill all things' (iv. 10). The full life-history of our Lord

Jesus Christ, with which the doctrine of this Epistle is in entire accord, is to be found in Phil. ii. 5–11. Only in Him and in this His completed life-history is the Divine Fatherhood fully displayed. And this in two respects. In the first place because the love, the mercy, the strength, and the patience by which our Lord wrought out this marvellous life-history from first to last and is still applying its consequences to the universe are the filial expression of the Fatherly love and purpose of God. And, in the next place, because at every stage of this process, whether the self-emptying or the self-fulfilment of the Son of God, the presence of the Father is with the Son, and all the resources of the Father's glory are at His disposal. For all these reasons the Fatherhood of God is only to be understood in the light of His Fatherhood towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and by means of its expression throughout the whole of His redemptive life and work.

Once more, the Apostle finds *the verification* of the Divine Fatherhood in our Lord Jesus Christ. As he says elsewhere, 'Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father' (Rom. vi. 4). The Resurrection is for St. Paul the cardinal proof of the whole of his gospel. 'If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain,' he says to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xv. 17). The Resurrection holds the same place in the teaching of this Epistle, though here it is displayed in its inseparable connexion with the Ascension—its essential consequence and culmination. St. Paul never altered his judgement

as to the decisive importance of our Lord's Resurrection. It was at once the historical event and the spiritual power which revealed and guaranteed the truth of the gospel.

The Resurrection of Christ is ascribed in this Epistle, as elsewhere in St. Paul's writings, to the power of the Father (i. 19, 20; see also Rom. vi. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 15, &c.). What then, it may be asked, becomes of our Lord's own inherent life and divine power, if the Resurrection were wrought upon Him, rather than by Him? The answer to this question is twofold. To begin with, on no view of our Lord's true divinity can the originating and consentient action of the Father be excluded. And to come to the heart of the Apostle's teaching, St. Paul treats the governing law of the Incarnation, and therefore the whole course of redemption, as the fulfilment of filial obedience on the part of the Son. This obedience means that His self-emptying was that of ready submission to the will of the Father. Yet equally and for the same reason it implies filial receptiveness in the consequent glorification of which the Resurrection is the outstanding sign. Hence in our Lord Jesus Christ are alike the ground and the revelation, the full expression and the decisive proof, of the Fatherhood of God.

III. *Ephesians* i. 17.—The transition is natural to the next great description of God's Fatherhood. He is called 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.' That is to say, His relationship to our Lord Jesus Christ manifests God as the subject and substance of a sublime self-revelation

which fills the whole universe with its wondrous radiance. The conception of 'glory' is familiar to us from the Old Testament. St. Paul takes it over as part of his spiritual inheritance from Israel. According to it, self-revelation, and self-revelation in splendour, is the ceaseless activity of God. The essential mark of His perfection is that He does not keep it to Himself, but manifests it in and to His creatures. These, through their response to Him, glorify Him in their turn by reflecting His mind and character in the fulfilment of His purpose for them. Here then the conception of such self-revelation is present: 'The God of our Lord Jesus Christ' is 'the Father of glory.'

But the bare thought of self-revelation is transfigured by that of splendour. And this splendour is centred and consists in the Fatherhood out of which it springs. The glory of God is simply the manifestation of the heavenly Fatherhood in which all His perfection is eternally realized and is ceaselessly active in the fulfilment of His purposes of love.

And in the glory of God His creation has its part. Sometimes His glory is made manifest as though against His creation. Herein is the divine judgement. But above all, the glory of God is revealed in the transformation and uplifting of creation. Herein is salvation. The beatific meaning of this is displayed in Isaiah's Temple-vision (Isa. vi.). The enraptured worship of the Seraphim, in which they act as the representatives of the universe before God, shows that the glory of God is the life and

blessedness of heaven and earth. In His glory they are glorified. In turn they glorify Him, and thereby come into the heritage of His divine perfection. So, undoubtedly, is it here. 'The Father of glory,' in displaying the glory of His perfect Fatherhood, vouchsafes a share in it to sinful men by conferring upon them 'the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself' (i. 5). His sons acclaim 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ' as 'the Father of glory' with a filial worship, which enters into and appropriates the divine glory, as containing the unspeakable satisfaction, the boundless promise of eternal life.

IV. *Ephesians* iii. 14, 15.—The fourth great passage is the description of God with which the Apostle prefaces his remarkable prayer at the end of the third chapter. 'For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family [or Fatherhood] in heaven and on earth is named.' The two words upon which attention must be fastened first of all are 'family,' otherwise rendered 'fatherhood,' and 'named.' The alternative rendering in the case of the former is due to the fact that the original word (*πατριά*) includes, and unites both meanings. The 'patria' or family is a living unit which derives its unity from the headship and authority of the father (*πατήρ*). This was the case alike with Jew, with Greek, with Roman, and even with barbarian. The primary unit of society was the family and not the individual. The unity of the family was constituted by the fatherly headship which gave law to the whole of the family. This authority of

fatherly law is grounded in love, and is designed to promote not merely the being, but the well-being of the whole family.

The fatherly constitution of the whole family group carried with it for ancient peoples, and above all for the Jews, the patriarchal constitution of the state. Tribes and communities accounted for their unity on the ground that all the members thus bound together shared descent from a common ancestor. Hence, what is in the Apostle's mind is neither fatherhood in the abstract, nor, on the other hand, the family as a group of individuals, but the family —whether in its narrower or its broader denotation —as an organic unity constituted and held together by the headship and authority of the father.

The word 'named' is equally important. It might possibly have a merely superficial meaning. The word 'patria' is derived from 'pater.' Indeed the two words are correlative. But justice would not be done to the Apostle's thought on the supposition that this etymological connexion was all that he had in view. For Hebrew thought the name, as has already been seen, stands for the essential meaning and even for the vital force, the self-realizing energy, of the thing that is named. The name is not a mere summing up in thought; it stands for the objective activity of the person or thing that is named. For example, the saints of the Old Testament trust in 'the Name of Jehovah.' What is meant is certainly not confidence in the Name of God as a title, or even in the Name as simply connoting certain attributes. The Name stands for the

self-expression of God in His covenant and in His redemptive activity.

Hence when the Apostle says that ' every family in heaven and earth ' is ' named ' after ' the Father,' he means that it derives its essential meaning and its living reality from the Father. The family is what it is, not merely by virtue of an earthly fatherhood, but because in and through the earthly father the Divine Fatherhood is stamped upon the family and reflected by it. Just as the universe is held together by the fatherly sovereignty of ' the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ' in such wise that divine love gives being, purpose, and law to the whole, so the earthly family is held together by a fatherly sovereignty which derives its meaning and its virtue from the fatherly sovereignty of God. Hence, this great saying opens up to us a profound philosophy of creation and of the immanence of God in it. The passage should be set side by side with the ninth verse of this chapter, which speaks of ' the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things.' The ' mystery of Christ ' now revealed is not accidentally connected with the universe. It has been eternally hid in God, who, as the Creator of all things, has so constituted the nature of the universe as not merely to permit of, but to necessitate, its fulfilment in the complete manifestation of Christ. Yet the universe could not be thus fulfilled in the manifestation of Christ unless it had been so rooted and grounded in love as to have within it the spiritual capacity to rise to the life of love as it is perfected and set

forth in and through Christ. Therefore the creatorship of a God, in the depth of whose nature the secret of Christ is contained, must needs be such an overflowing of love as makes love the essential force and the vital bond of unity throughout creation; above all the creative force and the bond of unity in the human family out of which springs mankind.

Hence, this great description of God in His creative relationship to the world stands in closest connexion with the three passages already considered. 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 'the Father of glory,' must needs manifest Himself by setting the marks of love upon the whole of His creation. The marks of love mean, in the last resort, the capacity of loving. This capacity lies at the heart of family life, and is the indispensable means by which its infinite possibilities are developed. These infinite possibilities prepare the way in their turn for the entrance upon that life of spiritual and eternal love in which men are enabled to speak of God as 'our Father.' The capacity for Divine Sonship lies in the very constitution of mankind and is the essential condition upon which the exercise of grace in redemption and adoption depends. Thus this great text is the necessary fusion of the Christian experience of grace and of the Hebrew doctrine of creatorship. The meaning of creation is read anew in the light of the gospel. Its secret is found not in the will or in the power, not even in the wisdom of God, but in the love that springs out of His eternal Fatherhood.

V. The other important passages in the Epistle

may easily be grouped together and briefly dealt with. The most important is to be found in chap. ii. 18—'for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father.' Chap. iv. 6 speaks of 'the God and Father of all [that is in this context of all believers], who is over all and in all.' In chap. v. 20 there is a reference to 'God even the Father'; in vi. 23 to 'God the Father.'

Taken together, these passages bring the Fatherhood of God into intimate connexion with the spiritual life of men. The Father, the first Person in the Blessed Trinity, gives, if the expression may be allowed, fatherly direction to the whole activity of the Godhead. Hence, 'the Father' stands for the summing up of the doctrine of God as contained in the gospel of His Son. Yet just because the relations of the Father to His creation, and especially to the spiritual creation, are immanent as well as transcendent, the discovery and enjoyment of the Fatherhood is essential to the satisfaction of man. To 'have access unto the Father' is the only way to attain blessedness. Hence, God is set forth throughout this Epistle not abstractly in His own nature, but relatively to mankind in grace, and as the source of individual, infinite, and eternal satisfaction. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ' (i. 3). The fatherly nature of God is revealed in the divine capacity He has implanted in human hearts, and in the unbounded provision He has made in Christ for its satisfaction. The full realization of Sonship

in us is the eternal end that is pursued by the beneficence of the Father. The accomplishment of that purpose, despite human sin, is the motive of redemption. The sovereign claim of God, who has made believers His own possession (i. 14), is in order to the gift of this eternal blessedness in Himself. The Divine Fatherhood unites the glory of God and the salvation of man until they become two aspects of the same glorious and gracious reality. The universe itself is comprehended in this fatherly aim, both serving it and deriving from it in its every part its own measure of blessedness.

Such is in bare outline the doctrine of God as it is contained in the Epistle to the Ephesians. It only remains to sum up its main characteristics.

What, then, are the characteristics of the doctrine of God contained in the Epistle to the Ephesians?

1. In the first place, it is completely contained in Christ; He is both the substance and the expression of it. There is nothing abstract or *a priori* in St. Paul's theology. It is not reached by speculative reason; it is made manifest to him in Christ, in whom alike the mind, the purpose, and the power of God are revealed to men. The authority and the substance of all St. Paul's statements about God are to be found in Christ, and in the life of the Spirit conferred by Christ.

The apprehension and experience of Christ are the means of conveying to the Apostle his knowledge of the character of God, of the relations in which He stands to man and to the universe, and of the ends which He seeks to realize. The dominant

word which expresses both the disposition and the activity of God as they are revealed in Christ is grace—the free and condescending favour by which God imparts Himself for the salvation and satisfaction of man. This grace becomes mercy when He deals with the guilt and helplessness of sin. Both grace and mercy are the manifestation of that essential love which is the characteristic of perfect Fatherhood. 'But He, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even though we were dead through our trespasses, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up together with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus' (ii. 4–7).

Hence the Apostle proceeds throughout from the manifestation of God's highest and greatest to the apprehension of His nature and work as a whole. He does not build up what is termed a Natural Theology first, and then add to it a doctrine of grace. All such attempts leave of necessity a chasm between the two. It is well if so-called Natural Theology does not obliterate the distinctive features of grace, or if, on the other hand, the doctrine of grace does not appear as an irrational invasion of a self-contained order that is complete in itself. St. Paul deals with the whole from the highest and most comprehensive standpoint. Christ—incarnate, risen, and exalted—is in such wise the climax of God's dealings with men and with the universe, that the

only possibility of explaining either the one or the other is to treat Christ as manifesting the grace that has been implicit from the beginning. Thus, what is made manifest in Christ through the work of redemption is carried back and seen to be the spring and motive from which creation itself proceeds. God is known only as He reveals Himself, His self-revelation is summed up in Christ; the end of Christ is cast back to the very beginning. The foundations of the world were laid with a view to Christ. Hence, the creative motive in God is seen to be identical with the grace that became manifest in Christ.

2. At the same time, nay because of this, St. Paul does not isolate the revelation of God in Christ from all that has gone before. A principle of continuity runs through all his teaching. The very fact that he preserves and makes use of the title *Christ* makes him, as Christian, the inheritor of the whole teaching of the Old Testament, fulfilled and transcended in Christ. His Christ is no longer the earthly and merely miraculous Christ of his old Jewish conceptions. St. Paul's Christology, as will be seen later on, has been spiritualized and transfigured by his experience of redemption. But the thought-forms it has derived from the Old Testament remain, enlarged and deepened by the new universalism.

Hence, just as Christ is conceived by St. Paul as the fulfilment of Old Testament Christology, so God as made known in Christ is the fulfilment of Old Testament theology. It is safe to say that only

one who had been schooled in Old Testament theology could possibly have written this Epistle. The sovereignty of God as it is portrayed, the emphasis laid on His glory and His grace, the perfection of His character and the freedom of His predestinating will, the manifestation of that will in historic deed, all betray their source in the Old Testament. The main features of the Old Testament doctrine of God as it is conveyed by prophets and psalmists live for ever in the Epistle to the Ephesians in the yet more glorious doctrine of God in Christ.

3. Fatherhood is the supreme and typical relation in which God comes to stand to men in Christ. His Fatherhood is spiritual and gracious. It is rather the goal than the starting-point of His dealings with men. Yet the very fact that its realization is the goal implies that it is potentially the source of the whole of God's dealings with mankind. The Fatherhood that is made completely manifest in redemptive and adopting grace must needs be creative and constitutive from the beginning. It must be universal in principle and power in order that it may become special and personal in realization and fulfilment. It is impossible to conceive of a God who has hitherto been unfatherly becoming by a new act the Father of them that believe. The very fact that He becomes their Father in this way is the fulfilment of an eternal purpose of love. The Epistle leads us to this sure conclusion and reason itself consents to it. Moreover, if this doctrine of God be true, it must also be final. No

relationship can be conceived by the mind of man higher and deeper, more comprehensive and far-reaching, than that which is set forth in this Epistle.

4. The fulfilment of God's Fatherhood is towards sons—chosen, adopted, and quickened by His grace. Hence, the divine sovereignty is a fostering and not an annihilating power. The transcendence of God is not overwhelming but uplifting. The fact that God is 'all in all' does not efface man, but perfects him in the life of spiritual perfection and fellowship. This is perhaps the most remarkable feature of Christian and of Pauline theology. It is difficult to make room in the universe, as it is construed by reason, for a sovereign Lord and a free man, for such supremacy of the divine as allows the human to have play. Hence, so often, either a theology that abases man or an anthropology that expels God. The distinctive glory of this Epistle as the culmination of St. Paul's writings is that the sovereignty of God is seen to be most effectively manifested in the uplifting and in the freeing of man. The fatherly-filial relationship corrects the one-sided extremes into which human thought has been so often betrayed.

5. The Fatherhood of God set forth in the Epistle, while spiritual in its nature, is universal and is the source of all His sovereign actions. It is true that its full meaning can only be realized in those who receive in Christ Jesus 'the adoption of sons.' So far as others are concerned, this promise is for the present unfulfilled. Indeed, the relationship of sonship to God constitutes the great dis-

tinction between those who believe and those who do not. Yet to harden this contrast until God is represented as being unfatherly towards any is totally alien from the spirit of the Epistle. It is true that St. Paul speaks of those who are 'by nature children of wrath,' and includes mankind under that description (ii. 3). Yet obviously this is not the last word on the subject. There is no wrath like that of disappointed love. The very fact of such wrath existing is in itself a proof of the greatness of the fatherly purpose which has so far remained unfulfilled. Indeed, the context makes this abundantly clear, for behind the wrath of God which was universal towards the children of disobedience was the working of His mercy in Christ Jesus. 'But God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ' (ii. 4, 5).

Hence the fatherly relationship now fulfilled in the case of believers rests upon the fatherly purpose which existed beforehand. This fatherly purpose reveals a nature 'rich' in grace, mercy, and glory (i. 7; i. 18; ii. 4; ii. 7; iii. 16). It is within the range of this purpose 'to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth' (i. 10). Further, the foundations of the world have been laid in love, as has been seen, for 'every fatherhood in heaven and earth' is named after the Father, and fatherhood is the determining relationship upon which the whole social order is built up. Of course, a problem

arises in regard to those who are not at present reached and won by the divine mercy. That problem must be faced when the nature and scope of the Father's eternal purpose are considered. There may be some reason to think that St. Paul himself has not spoken any final or dogmatic word upon the subject, although he has been too lightly understood to have done so.

It would appear that the apostle, however he may imply it, does not expressly teach the universality of the Fatherhood of God. And for this very good reason, that to have done so would have obliterated the spiritual significance of his teaching. The heathen world was sufficiently familiar with the all-fatherhood of Zeus. The understanding of this fatherhood was largely physical. Among philosophers no doubt it rose to pantheistic mysticism or to a doctrine of the relation of the universal to the individual reason. But it was never completely moralized, to say nothing of being spiritualized. Moreover, those who taught such a fatherhood even in its highest philosophic form had never faced the problem of human sin and guilt.

The new experience of God, representing the entrance into a new relationship to Him, was, above all, spiritual and evangelical. It is with this new relationship that St. Paul deals. Yet the whole of his treatment shows that the full entrance into the enjoyment of this holy relationship is the fruition of a fatherly purpose which is inmost in the heart of God and governs the whole history and the ultimate destinies of the universe.

6. Hence the magnificent expansiveness of the divine love. The sense of its immeasurable beneficence underlies St. Paul's unbounded anticipations of ever-growing blessedness in Christ, reaching on to the being 'filled unto all the fullness of God' (iii. 19). Indeed, to those who look beneath the surface it will become clear that the infinite capacity and need of man to receive this divine fullness, which is the subjective side of this Epistle, is in itself a revelation of the infinite grace of the Father who creates that capacity that He may satisfy it 'according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus' (Phil. iv. 19). Thus the Fatherhood of God towards believers is so set forth alike in teaching, prayer, and expectation that it becomes the key to the whole of God's character and the whole of His dealings with creation.

Two elements are contained in this expansiveness of the Divine Fatherhood. In the first place, the radiant glory of His self-revelation. He is 'the Father of glory.' St. Paul has no separate doctrine of revelation. He does not divide his theology into compartments, as has been the later custom of theologians. His doctrine of revelation is contained in his doctrine of grace. It is in grace that revelation is consummated. The ceaseless activity of God, who from the beginning has ordered the world with a view to the appearance of Christ in 'the fullness of the times' and to the consummation of His redemptive work, carries with it the assumption that self-revelation is of His very nature. This self-revelation is conditioned by the

capacity of the creature to receive it. It works along spiritual and moral lines. This must needs be the case, for the glory of God is spiritual and moral and can therefore only appear to those whose spiritual and moral capacity is prepared to receive it.

Within these limitations, if limitation be the word to apply to laws which are inherent in spiritual and moral perfection, God is not remote from His universe or concealed within it. It is of His very nature to manifest Himself, and to manifest Himself in a splendour which both calls forth and satisfies the spiritual aspiration of those who apprehend Him by faith.

The other consequence is that the universal action of God is in accordance with His Fatherhood. There can be no mean destiny before a universe that is controlled by such a sovereignty as God's. As St. Paul looks out upon the whole range of things and looks forward to their final destiny there is no hesitation in his mind, no fear of eventual miscarriage, or any thought that there can possibly be a poor and pitiful issue to such a purpose. The prospects of history are in keeping with its source. The greatness of the Author gives the assurance that His work will be a masterpiece. Hence the wonderful sweep of the Epistle and the measured optimism that prevails throughout it.

7. Lastly, it is clear that in all this is given the final word of theology. The doctrine of God contained in this Epistle is St. Paul's equivalent for the great declaration 'God is Love,' which is the summing up of St. John's. It is impossible to con-

ceive the human mind ever coming to apprehend anything greater, higher, or deeper than this. As long as humanity lasts its highest will be contained in fatherhood and love. And this because of the very constitution of human nature itself. In saying this it is not implied that in this respect any other nature can be conceived greater and higher than that of man. In the belief of St. Paul and according to the teaching of this Epistle, God has spoken His highest and His final word in His Fatherhood and in His love. There is no short-sightedness or presumption in this belief. It rests simply upon the assumption that God by His fatherly nature is self-constrained to reveal and to give His highest and best, and that therefore He has not failed to give existence to creatures who by their nature are fitted to apprehend and to receive His fullness. Doubtless He has other spiritual subjects than man, and other words of His have been spoken to them. But they cannot differ in kind nor can they rise higher in intrinsic perfection than the word of His grace which has been given to mankind in Christ. Theology must always be new in the sense of attempting more fully to realize and more adequately to express the meaning and consequences of this great revelation. It can, however, never discover any truth that is not implicitly contained in it. There may remain for some minds an alternative between this theology and none. There can never be an alternative between this theology and a better. And in this greatest concern the best is the only possible.

CHAPTER V

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GRACE

After St. Paul's customary salutation the Epistle to the Ephesians opens with a great declaration in regard to the eternal purpose of God. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ: even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace' (i. 3–6).

Later on the Apostle speaks of God's good pleasure 'which He purposed in Christ unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in Him, I say, in whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will' (i. 9–11).

Again, in a similar connexion mention is made

subsequently of 'the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord' (iii. 11).

Certain features stand out at once in these passages. First of all, the choice of believers is special in regard to persons. The act of adoption with its witness in individual experience must, of necessity, be a personal dealing with each individual who is the object of it. Yet, although personal, it represents in each case a world-embracing purpose. Throughout the Epistle the particular and the universal bearings of divine grace are so interwoven as to be not only inseparable, but confirmatory of one another. Further, the will of God is the supreme factor of which account must be taken. The destiny of man and of the universe does not depend upon chance, upon necessity, or upon anything so inherent in the nature of things as to be self-explanatory. The only sovereignty in the universe, according to the Apostle, resides in the will of God, and this sovereignty is complete.

This supreme will of God, however, represents not bare sovereignty but, as has been seen, Fatherhood. The Apostle does not speak as a man who is overawed by an overwhelming demonstration of power; still less as one possessed by an austere or forbidding conception of God. The divine will and divine grace are, according to his teaching, inseparable and co-extensive. The most careful search of this Epistle will fail to discover any point at which the will of God stands apart from His grace, or any experience of His grace, which does not bring with it the full assurance that the free exercise of

God's grace is the normal operation of His supreme and sovereign will.

The eternal purpose of God is revealed and fulfilled in Christ Jesus, and in the unfathomable mercy made effectual in Him. The destination to which the sovereign grace of God foreordains men in Christ is to 'the adoption of sons unto Himself,' and, therefore, to the infinite glory of the inheritance of sons. The might of God's sovereign power is revealed in redemption, in the resurrection of Christ and the quickening of believers in Him, in the all-sufficient empowerment which enables them to apprehend 'what is the breadth and length and height and depth' of the divine gift of love. The all-embracing range of the divine sovereignty—thus revealed objectively in Christ and subjectively in believers—is seen in the ordering of the universe and of its history so that it co-operates to give full effect to the work of Christ. Thus the sense of spaciousness and expansiveness, of freedom with its attendant responsibility, makes itself felt throughout St. Paul's treatment of the sovereignty of God. The boundless humility which the apprehension of this sovereignty produces is the counterpart of an equally boundless exaltation. All this must be examined in detail.

1. The Apostle's doctrine is of the absolute sovereignty of God. Believers have 'been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will' (i. 11). This absolute sovereignty, however, is conditioned by the perfection of God, and is, there-

fore, directed to the accomplishment of His purpose of grace. Hence the first note struck by the Apostle is the note of divine personality, of supreme and consistent purpose, and of universal sovereignty as the expression of this personality in the fulfilment of His holy purpose. It is clear that this doctrine has its roots in the Old Testament theology which St. Paul inherited. The special features of that theology are its insistence upon divine personality as holy perfection, and upon its manifestation in a consistent and holy purpose governing the history of the world. Opposition to the divine will there is. The very fact that the Old Testament lays such stress on the holiness of God and upon the activity of His will in giving effect to a purpose that is entirely shaped by His holiness prevents it from overlooking or making light of the reality of the opposition which this divine purpose encounters. If less emphasis were laid upon the holiness of the divine personality and upon the sovereignty of the divine will, the significance of evil might be belittled and its reality explained away. The paradox, however, appears that the greater the insistence upon the holy perfection and the sovereign will of God the more real and terrible does the fact appear that the perfect will of God encounters resistance from a rebellious and evil will in men. This is, indeed, the metaphysical crux of the Old Testament theology. The greater the stress that is laid upon the sovereignty of the divine purpose the more difficult it becomes to understand how anything can fall outside its range. The same problem arises in an

even acuter form in the case of St. Paul's theology. As students of theological history are well aware, it has been most difficult for those who have insisted most strongly upon the ordaining will of God as the supreme factor in the history of mankind to maintain the reality of evil, or to avoid attributing the responsibility for its existence to the divine will. Insistence on the holiness of God brings out the reality of sin as contradicting His mind and will; while insistence on the sovereignty of God makes it necessary to interpret sovereignty in such a sense that neither is the contradiction denied in order to magnify the sovereignty nor the sovereignty belittled by admitting the contradiction.

The Old Testament supplies the essentials of a solution, which this Epistle completes. It avoids undue emphasis on makership as the fundamental element in the divine sovereignty. Those who fall into this extreme are driven either to treat sin as a mere negation—a privation—of life, or else to infer that sin is due to a real, if secondary, ordination of God. In the latter alternative, sin appears as really ordained by God, because otherwise it could not have entered into a world that is governed by a divine law which permits nothing to appear without its ordination. Yet the divine ordination of evil appears to be secondary; that is, it is a means to an end, because evil enters temporarily into the order of things in order that it may be overcome of good, and that thus the good may eventually be magnified by its triumph over evil. Such excess leads to a reaction which limits, if it does not deny,

the sovereignty of God, and regards the creation of man as a venture which may possibly end in failure. In contrast with these divergent views, which are all equally fatal to any true idea of God, the Old Testament doctrine of the sovereignty of God has His Fatherhood, though as yet not unfolded, at its heart. The creation of man is the work of divine love. It involves the gift of freedom, with all that freedom means. Yet equally it involves the fact that man grows up in the presence of God, whose immanence besets him behind and before, in a universe which is governed by the law of God, and with a nature that is capable of God, and therefore in need of Him. Thus man's freedom, disastrous as its exercise has been, is subject to a threefold restraint and safeguard—namely, the activity of God, the constitution of His universe, and such kinship of human nature with its Creator that entire and permanent departure from God would mean its dissolution. These saving limitations of freedom all proceed from the fatherliness of the creative sovereignty of God; they constitute the immanent conditions under which man's freedom is exercised, and, therefore, involve no external interference with it. Taken together, they give assurance that the triumph of God is certain, and that it will come, not by the suppression, but by the perfecting of freedom, the freedom of the sons of God. Such appears to be in broad outline the Old Testament doctrine of the sovereignty of God over man,[1] and it is taken over by the Apostle. The blessing that

[1] Notably in the Wisdom literature.

comes to man is because of God's free act; the course of history is shaped according to His eternal counsel. This counsel was first revealed in the choice by which God set apart a peculiar people to Himself. Its fresh manifestation is now seen, according to St. Paul, in His throwing down all racial distinctions and admitting the Gentiles as well as the Jews to the privileges of the Covenant. And yet larger prospects appear in sight; for 'the good pleasure which He purposed in Him unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times' is 'to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth' (i. 9, 10). The gracious foreordination of individuals is contained in this universal purpose, and is necessary in order that effect may be given to it.

2. The positive and beneficent nature of the eternal purpose of God is made manifest in the form of its spiritual fulfilment. The Epistle does not present an abstract doctrine of divine sovereignty, or seek to magnify the rights and activity of the bare will of God. The Apostle and those to whom he writes have come into the enjoyment of a fresh and most gracious relationship to God. They have received 'adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself' (i. 5). This experience is not an attainment of their own, but a gift freely bestowed upon them by God. It confers an experience so high and holy and satisfying that it appears at once to be the goal of God's dealings with mankind. Nothing previously known can approach it; nothing subsequent can possibly surpass it. This

experience of Sonship, thus bestowed, is so transcendent and all-embracing that no element of human blessedness lies outside it, and no vestige of evil can finally withstand it. The conferment of this divine relationship, with all that it contains both in actuality and in prospect, is marked out by its intrinsic value, no less than by the redemptive work which accomplishes it, as the supreme gift of God to men. It is the only end which makes the creation of man a work worthy of the divine glory from which it springs. It is all-important thus to bring together the Apostle's doctrine of the divine purpose with the gracious experience in which that purpose is manifested. Each throws light upon the other. Above all, 'the unsearchable riches' of grace that are manifested in 'the adoption of sons,' if rightly understood, make it altogether impossible to attribute either harshness to the divine will or exclusiveness to the divine purpose. The wonder of love revealed in the new relationship and in all that leads up to it manifests the characteristic and resplendent glory of its originating source. The sovereignty of God is now completely revealed in the light of His Fatherhood ; His sovereign Fatherhood in the light of the blessedness it confers and of the infinite cost to God Himself by which this blessedness is conferred.

3. The divine purpose, which governs all things and which attains its end in this gracious adoption of sons, has reached the final goal of its fulfilment through an ordered process. If the Epistle lays the greatest stress upon grace in one aspect, it lays

equal stress upon 'wisdom and prudence' in another. In speaking of 'the riches of His grace' the Apostle amplifies his description by adding, 'which He made to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him [Christ] *unto a dispensation of the fullness of the seasons*' (i. 8–10). Thus in accomplishing His purposes and giving effect to His grace, God works by ordered means, has regard to 'times and seasons,' and causes the moment of the revelation of Christ to coincide with the preparation of the world to receive Him. His will is motived and directed by grace, and gracious will works by the ordered means which make history a progressive revelation of God through the steady unfolding and fulfilling of His purpose of salvation. The view of redemption in Christ as the culmination of an ordered process in which the sovereign wisdom of God is displayed is prominent throughout this Epistle, and indeed governs St. Paul's survey of history in all his writings, notably in the Epistle to the Galatians and to the Romans. The whole method and process by which 'the Mystery of Christ' has been disclosed stand revealed and justified in the final event which makes 'known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord' (iv. 10, 11).

It is clear that God's sovereignty in the fulfilment of His eternal purpose of grace works, not only in love and not so much through power as commonly

understood, but also in wisdom, which is the true helpmeet of love. But, in regard to the main passage now under consideration, a considerable difficulty of exposition arises. When St. Paul speaks of 'the riches of' God's 'grace in which He abounded toward us *in all wisdom and prudence*,' is he speaking of wisdom and prudence as qualities in God or as gifts bestowed by Him upon men? In the third chapter, as has just been seen, 'the manifold wisdom of God,' which must mean a divine quality, is immediately connected with 'the eternal purpose' in Christ Jesus our Lord. In this passage there is a similar connexion between wisdom and the divine purpose. The difficulty is caused by the addition of the word 'prudence' (φρονήσις), which, while it stands for a quality that may possibly be attributed to God, seems more fitly to suggest the human capacity of right discernment, which teaches man how to conform himself in disposition and conduct to the conditions laid down by God. Moreover, the statement that God has 'abounded towards us' in 'the riches of His grace' certainly conveys the impression of gifts bestowed upon men. Yet again, the Apostle subsequently prays for the gift to his readers of 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation,' and this is accompanied by inward enlightenment (i. 17, 18). All this goes to strengthen the probability that 'wisdom and prudence' in this context are divine gifts to men. Yet, none the less, the mention of them is of vital importance as illustrating the ways of the divine sovereignty in the fulfilment of the eternal purpose

of grace. 'Wisdom and prudence' are characteristic gifts of grace because the whole method of God in the ordering and salvation of the world, in the manifestation and work of Christ, is such as to demand their exercise. If, nay because, 'All's love, all's law.' It is not a limitation, but a glorification of God's power, that treats it as the executive of His love, the means of enforcing a law, which, because it is founded in love, can only prevail as love and power go to bestow and call forth the 'wisdom and prudence' which lead to reverent and free obedience.

4. From all this it follows that the divine purpose of grace is generously expansive in its nature and application. Again and again the Apostle dwells upon 'the riches,' not only of Christ as revealed and experienced, but of the grace and glory out of which the gift of Christ proceeds (see i. 17, 18; ii. 4, 7; iii. 16). The universal sovereignty of Christ and the ever-widening sphere in which His sovereignty is fulfilled is the manifestation of a magnificence and generosity in God Himself, which words are inadequate to express. Hence, everywhere the unspeakable generosity which characterizes the purpose of God becomes manifest. It is expressed in Christ, in the redemptive sacrifice of His Cross, and in the infinite glory which has succeeded it. It is reflected in the boundless possibilities of the blessedness which is already enriching the adopted sons of God and holding out to them an eternal hope. Alike the Christ in whom the divine purpose is manifested and accomplished,

the joyful experience of sonship, and the prospects of inexhaustible blessedness that accompany it, go to reveal the splendour of fatherly love which governs the foreordination of the divine will.

5. Nor is this all. The lovingkindness of the divine purpose is seen not merely in this threefold manifestation of it. The universal significance of Christ and the world-embracing scope of the Apostle's commission imply that a divine capacity to receive salvation has been implanted in all men. The gospel for the first time reveals, by assuming, this universal capacity. Two great sayings appear to put this beyond question. St. Paul speaks of making 'all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from all ages hath been hid in God, who created all things' (iii. 9).[1] Later on he speaks of 'the Father, from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named' (iii. 15). Surely the reference to the divine creatorship in the former

[1] As considerable stress is laid throughout this study on the universality expressed in the words 'to make *all men* see,' it is necessary to say something about the various readings. Many authorities—*codices*, versions, and ancient commentaries—omit the word πάντας, 'all men.' Many admit it. Indeed, the external testimony is pretty equally divided. Hence the decision must be given mainly on subjective grounds. The R.V. admits the word, and even if it be excluded the spirit of universalism governs the passage. Both the words εὐαγγελίσασθαι and φωτίσαι suggest the widest and freest publication. Moreover, the preaching to *the Gentiles*—described in chap. ii. as having been in the past remote from the privileges of Israel—certainly suggests, if it does not necessitate, the 'all men' of the following clause.

passage and to the constitution of mankind in fatherhood contained in the latter suggest that the hope of making all men see the glory of ' the mystery ' revealed in Christ depends upon certain spiritual possibilities implanted in them by the Creator Himself. It is because of these possibilities derived from the very nature of the Creator that human fatherhood not only reflects, but even partakes of, the Fatherhood of God. Hence the grace of God has had an anticipatory manifestation in creation by laying down the lines and conferring the possibilities of human nature in such wise as to prepare the way for the manifestation of Christ in ' the fullness of the times ' and for the gift of blessedness in Him.

6. Hence the divine purpose is universal in its scope and potentiality. The whole tendency of the Epistle is to remove from God's advancing work of redemption all the limitations that the poverty of human thought and the narrowness of human hearts would impose upon it. Hence the fact that all things depend upon the counsel of God's will gives assurance and hope: assurance because of the supremacy of His authority which cannot ultimately miscarry; hope because His authority is that of the perfect Fatherhood which has been revealed in Christ and is now manifested in the hearts of believers.

7. Once more, the triumph of the divine purpose is secured by the sovereign influence of the personality of Christ. There is no note of compulsion or of necessity anywhere in the Epistle. The spiritual nature of man, and indeed of the universe,

forbids the thought of any such means either of preventing or of remedying sin with its attendant evils. The manifestation of Christ, the atonement of His Cross, the influence of His Spirit, all centring in the enthronement of His glorified Personality, are more than sufficient. They operate by spiritual means and motives that all triumph simply because they have regard to man's personality and its freedom. In no other way can the nature of God's sovereignty be displayed; by no other means can its triumph be achieved. The ultimate consummation, which will bring glory to God through the triumphant accomplishment of His purpose of grace, is assured. It has this threefold guarantee: the character of God revealed in Christ Jesus, as holy love; the constitution of His world in and for Christ, so that it can only fulfil the law of its being by serving and not by resisting Him; and lastly, the exaltation of Christ, whose personality, perfected through the Cross and active in the Spirit, fills all things with an influence that is all-attractive and all-transforming.

What has already been said as to the nature and manifestation of the divine sovereignty in Christ prepares the way for a clear understanding of the term 'grace' which is applied to the eternal purpose of God. This term, while characteristic of New Testament thought and of all St. Paul's teaching, is specially prominent in this Epistle. What is involved in it?

1. To begin with the absolute freedom of all the dealings of God with mankind. All that He does

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proceeds out of this perfect freedom. It is in the strictest sense a personal act, the full effect of which lies in this feature of it. It is important that this should be constantly borne in mind, and nothing can be more effective for this purpose than the teaching of this Epistle. Discussions as to the nature and operation of grace, especially in regard to its connexion with the sacraments of the Church, have often tended to obscure this personal character. Grace has been frequently spoken of almost as if it were an appointed intermediary between God and man, a commodity which God dispenses, a quasi-magical energy which is governed by laws that follow material rather than personal analogies. This conversion of grace into an occult entity dispensed by God through ordered means and under prescribed conditions is totally foreign to the use of the term by St. Paul, or indeed by any of the New Testament writers. Throughout this Epistle, as elsewhere, grace is above all a transcendent act and deed of God's love and of the sovereign will that gives effect to His love. As such it expresses His personal attitude towards mankind and gathers up into itself all His holy perfection. Indeed, as has already been remarked, while the two terms grace and glory are not entirely synonymous, they have become completely interchangeable in this Epistle. In one instance St. Paul actually speaks of ' the glory of His grace ' (i. 6). Hence, wherever grace is manifested and experienced it stands for the closest and most personal contact of God Himself with him who experiences it.

2. Since grace represents the personal attitude and action of God, what is its nature? Most condescending favour and most generous bounty. Both the one and the other are implied. So far as the former is concerned, grace is the practical expression of the fatherly love, which condescends to the weakness and frailty of man. So far as the second is concerned, the term grace implies that fatherly love goes forth to its objects with a wealth of benefaction that is in keeping with the infinite source from which it springs. The favour of God is no easy and ineffectual attitude towards men. It means that the fullness of divine perfection is put at their disposal.

3. Hence effective help is of the very essence of grace. While the doctrine of grace rebukes the self-sufficiency of man, it conveys to his heart that God will save to the uttermost, alike of degree and duration, those who put their trust in Him. Hence the Epistle to the Ephesians connects the grace of God in the closest way with His power exerted in our behalf.

For example, in the midst of his great description of the quickening together with Christ of those who had been dead in trespasses and in sins, and of how they have been raised to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus—the whole of which is an outstanding mark of God's power—the Apostle interpolates the declaration 'by grace have ye been saved.' He goes on to say that the object of this display of saving power is that 'in the ages to come He might show *the exceeding riches of His*

grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus' (ii. 5, 6).

4. But this fatherly condescension and bounty, this effective help, is displayed towards sinful men. Hence grace is most closely connected with mercy. Indeed, the two are almost interchangeable. For example, in the very passage just quoted, which attributes 'salvation' to grace, the Apostle says that 'God, being rich *in mercy*, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ' (ii. 4, 5). The love of God is manifested in grace, and the operation of grace in regard to a sinful world can only be in mercy. Grace, thus working through mercy, represents the effectual setting aside of sin both in itself and in all its effects in order that the ends of fatherly love may be fully wrought out. The nature of grace in all its holiness, righteousness, and love is revealed in redemption. Its resources and method are displayed in the whole of the work and of the process which culminates in the reconciliation and adoption of sinful men. While its saving energy is concentrated upon each individual who receives it, its operations include the entire universe, in so far as it shares the blessings or co-operates in the work of redemption.

Hence there is something transcendent and superabundant in grace as the Epistle describes it. Again and again the word 'riches' is applied to it or to its manifestation and experience. This term, of course, signifies inexhaustible fullness. But it seems also to carry with it the suggestion that in the

manifestation of grace in Christ God surpasses His own previous record and is ever surprising men by fresh tokens of His magnificence and munificence. In adopting men as His sons and raising them into heavenly places He consummates all His previous dealings with them. He made man the summit of creation ; ' Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, Thou crownedst him with glory and honour ' (Ps. viii.). Now he is raised from the summit of earthly well-being into the enjoyment and promise of the heavenly. The divine dealings which remove sin once for all through Christ transcend the work of the law. The breaking forth of ever new experiences of light and love triumphs over the limitations of human nature, and makes even its finitude, as created, capable of infinity. The election of Israel is enlarged to include the Gentiles. The triumphant power of Christ includes the universe itself. In all these respects God surpasses Himself in ' the fullness of the times.' The sense of riches in personal character and conduct comes home to us whenever we see excellence surpassed. In the experience of God's grace the Apostle, brought up in the great traditions of Old Testament faith, finds them all transcended in Christ. Hence the Epistle at every stage of its description suggests, not only a positive glory, but a ' glory that excelleth.' All the excellences of God's previous dealings with mankind have been gloriously surpassed in Christ, both in actual achievement and in infinity of promise.

Such is the divine sovereignty as it is set before us in the Epistle to the Ephesians. How does it conform

to the doctrine in the remarkable section of the Epistle to the Romans (ix.–xi.) which has worn so forbidding an aspect to many and of which so harsh an interpretation has often been given? It may safely be affirmed that that great passage has been signally misunderstood. It can hardly be imagined that an exposition which opens with the Apostle's 'wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh' (Rom. ix. 3) could be harsh in its doctrine of the attitude of God towards those for whom His Apostle feels pity. St. Paul would be the first to repudiate any suggestion that his own compassion could exceed the divine mercy of which he is the ambassador. And indeed it is not so. It is true that the Apostle, faithful to his doctrine of the sovereignty of God, traces His ordering hand and His foreordaining purpose in the fall of the Jews and in the uplifting of the Gentiles (Rom. ix.–xi.). St. Paul finds examples of such an election in the stories of Isaac and Ishmael, of Jacob and Esau. He magnifies the sovereign power of God as the Potter over the clay (Rom. ix. 21). Yet this is not the end of the matter. 'I say then, did God cast off His people? God forbid' (Rom. xi. 1). He goes on, 'Now if their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?' (Rom. xi. 12). And he ends with the triumphant conclusion, 'For as ye in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience, even so have these also now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown

to you they also may now obtain mercy. For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, *that He might have mercy upon all*' (Rom. xi. 30–32). Hence in this great passage where classical expression is given to the sovereignty of God, the dominant note is that of grace and mercy attaining a triumphant manifestation, not in spite of, but by means of, the judgement through which the holiness of divine sovereignty is revealed and made good.

To sum up. For St. Paul the nature of the divine sovereignty is made manifest in 'the eternal purpose' revealed and fulfilled in Christ. This purpose is of grace. Hence, the sovereignty is of love, working in mercy and wisdom; not of power with its *fiat*. Sovereign love works out its purpose in a world that has been constituted by it and for it. The means by which this purpose is accomplished is that of the work and influence of a supreme personality. Hence freedom reigns throughout. There is room both for the Creator and the creature; for law and liberty. The existing opposition to God is real. Its terrible significance must not be explained away or softened. Yet it is limited by the fatherly constitution of the world, overcome in principle by Christ, and is being overcome in detail by the method of His love and the influence of His Spirit. All this is made clear to St. Paul by the Divine Spirit of revelation. It is seen in the light of a great fact—the fact of Christ—and of a great experience springing up out of it. In both conjoined is contained the revelation of the supremacy of holy love as the content of the sovereign Fatherhood of God.

One word more must be said. It is due to the fact that grace and sovereignty are co-extensive and practically equivalent in St. Paul's doctrine of God that the Apostle attains to the largeness and spirituality of his doctrine of creation. He does not lay down a hard-and-fast Natural Theology of the universe, and then introduce into it from without a dispensation of grace to which the universe can with difficulty be adjusted. The eternal purpose of grace has inspired and organized the whole work of creation and the entire process of history. Hence, as the Epistle to the Romans also shows, the universe as a whole is involved in the great issues that are wrought out by grace. 'The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God' (Rom. viii. 21). As in the Epistle to the Romans the lower creation is treated as supremely concerned in the issues of grace, so in the Epistle to the Ephesians a yet higher order of creation is shown to be also concerned in it. The Apostle declares that his commission 'to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ' has been given to him, 'to the intent that now *unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly* places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord' (iii. 10, 11). Hence a twofold solidarity is taught in the Epistle. First, the solidarity between grace and creation. The eternal purpose of grace governs the work of creation, fixing both its ends and its means, and

thus giving to the universe such qualities as enable it to become the environment and condition of spiritual life. The second solidarity, which is consequent upon the first, is that between all parts of creation, heavenly, human, and material. All are concerned in the accomplishment of the work of Christ, which, while it deals pre-eminently with the sin of man, includes as its ultimate consequence the renovation of the universe. Thus the Apostle's doctrine of sovereign grace carries with it as a consequence a corresponding doctrine of the spiritual nature and destiny of the universe itself. Without this the sovereignty of ' the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ' could not be perfect.

It may be objected that the whole of this doctrine is anthropocentric. It represents the drama of human redemption as the supreme concern of the universe, as the decisive event upon which its future turns. Is not this an exaggeration of the importance of man, due to limited knowledge and defective imagination ? Subjectively, no doubt, this view of things was inevitable for St. Paul, and perhaps is so for mankind. But can it hold its own as being objectively true now that this earth is known to be, not the centre, but a remote and insignificant fragment of a system of worlds—even this system being probably only one of an infinite number ? The answer is simple. It is to be found not in the magnitudes or the infinities of stellar systems, but in the reality and spiritual values of the Divine Fact, as it is made known to and experienced by men. The spiritual possibilities of

man are so illimitable, the tragedy of sin is so great, and the glory of redemption so transcendent that it is impossible to exaggerate their universal significance. However many worlds there may be and however manifold may be the grace and wisdom of God in dealing with them, nothing can dim the splendour of ' the eternal purpose ' for mankind in Christ, nor can any action of God elsewhere be inconsistent with it. There can be only one truth of God for all worlds. This truth is contained in ' the Mystery of Christ.' Just as common laws and forces bind all parts of the universe together in one material whole, so there can be no other destination of final and universal blessedness save that which is guaranteed in the eternal purpose of God ' to sum up all things in Christ.'

CHAPTER VI

CHRIST AS THE SPHERE AND THE AGENT OF GRACE

The Apostle deals first and foremost with the eternal purpose of God's grace. This purpose includes the destruction of evil and the complete fulfilment of the merciful designs of fatherly love. Yet these designs are not and cannot be accomplished by a mere fiat of the divine will. The purpose of God's will is never for a moment allowed to stand alone. Behind it stands the holy and gracious character which is connoted by His Fatherhood. But, further, its manifestation, its substance, its instrument, its whole meaning and reality subsist in Christ. Grace and Christ are co-extensive. There is no manifestation of the eternal purpose of the Father, except in Christ. He is the divine means by which alone the purpose is realized and made effectual. Nay more, He is the sum-total of the life of salvation and blessedness, which the purpose of Grace bestows, with all its infinite and eternal possibilities.

The most cursory study of the Epistle will show that this is not an exaggerated statement. The Apostle opens with the usual salutation: 'To the

faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (i. 1, 2), where grace and peace proceed alike from God and from Christ. The God 'who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing' is 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' These blessings are found 'in the heavenly places in Christ' (i. 3). God has chosen believers 'in Him,' that is in Christ, 'before the foundation of the world' (i. 4). Our foreordination unto adoption as sons is 'through Christ Jesus unto Himself' (i. 5). His grace has been 'freely bestowed on us in the Beloved' (i. 6). In Him 'we have our redemption' (i. 7). He hath 'made known unto us the mystery of His will according to His good will which He purposed in Him unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ' (i. 9, 10). Hence, Christ is the object of hope (i. 12), and believers were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise (i. 13). The quickening by which believers have been raised from the death of sin and made to sit in the heavenly places is in Christ Jesus (ii. 7). They have been 'created in Christ Jesus for good works' (ii. 10). It is 'in Christ Jesus' that those 'who once were afar off have been made nigh in the blood of Christ' (ii. 13). Hence Christ Jesus is the Chief Corner-stone of the new building (ii. 20). The promise, which has been extended to the Gentiles, is 'in Christ Jesus through the gospel' (iii. 6). The eternal purpose has been purposed 'in Christ Jesus our Lord' (iii. 11). The ascription of glory to God for this work of grace is 'in the

Church and in Christ Jesus' unto all generations for ever and ever (iii. 21). Christ has 'ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things' (iv. 10). Hence the Kingdom in which believers have inheritance is 'the Kingdom of Christ and of God' (v. 5). Believers are to give thanks 'always for all things in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father' (v. 20). The whole of their conduct is to be in and unto Christ (vi. 1, 5, 7). Thus Christ, who is co-extensive with the divine purpose of grace, is also co-extensive with the response that believers make to that grace. The thanksgiving and aspiration in which their spiritual personality ascends to God and the whole conduct by which they give expression to their personality towards men is in Christ. He is in very deed the sphere in which they live and move and have their being. He is 'all and in all.'

So all-embracing is Christ that it is difficult and indeed needless to set forth all that He is by way of enumeration and description. All and more than all that the natural universe can be to the natural life, Christ is to a spiritual life which includes within its sphere the whole of even the natural life. St. Paul has no intention to set forth two realms, one of the spirit where life is Christ, and another of nature bounded by conditions and laws that are independent of, and possibly opposed to, Christ. For the Apostle the whole universe is at least potentially one, and Christ, who is supreme in and over the spiritual life, is thereby shown to be supreme over all the subordinate realms of

being which come into subjection to spiritual life. Christ is the sphere in which God's redemptive purpose exists, and in which it is carried into effect. From its first inception to its final accomplishment all is in Him. There is no possibility of ever passing beyond this governing condition of the spiritual life. There is no knowledge and enjoyment of God except in Christ, no realization of the divine life by man except in Him.

But just because He is all this, the Epistle is bound to go yet farther. We are told of the good pleasure of God, ' which He purposed in Him unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth ' (i. 10). From this it is clear that the inclusion of believers in Christ is only the beginning of a process which is ultimately to extend to the whole universe. Indeed, St. Paul's conception of the relation of believers to the universe is such that the pre-eminence of Christ in the spiritual sphere, as creating, fashioning, sustaining, and satisfying the life of believers, carries with it the assumption and assurance that He has a like supremacy throughout the universe.

The Epistle to the Ephesians leaves the matter at this point, but enough is said to show that still more is implied than is stated. Hence, for the completion of its teaching, the Epistle needs to be supplemented by the Epistle to the Colossians, where the Apostle declares ' in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, whether

thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist,' or hold together (Col. i. 16, 17). This doctrine of the creative relationship of the Son of God to the whole universe is the essential condition of the doctrine of the Epistle to the Ephesians, as to the eternal purpose of God towards believers and the redemptive transformation of the universe.

Christ, thus regarded as the sphere in which the purpose of God is wrought out and the life of man both redeemed and satisfied, must be understood as being alike the full manifestation of God and the complete realization of the spiritual life of man. These two elements, complete divine manifestation in redemptive action and energy on the one hand, and equally complete realization of humanity on the other, are united in Him. Christ is Himself the spiritual realm in which God is manifested and humanity achieved.

Who, then, is the Christ holding this unique place in relation both to the purpose of God and to the spiritual life of man? The name is a title that describes His spiritual office and value for mankind. It is, of course, the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew Messiah or Anointed One. All the sources of Jewish religion have gone to mould the conception in St. Paul's mind. The Prophets, both earlier and later, have all made their contributions. All the higher expectations of the Messianic King have been adopted by St. Paul. But more. The

prophecies of the Messianic Prophet and of the Messianic Priest, excluded in the current Jewish theology from the Messianic hope, have been brought into it by St. Paul as by the other apostolic teachers. The Apocalyptic writings of Daniel and others have certainly not been without their influence upon his mind. And yet the product is not the sum-total of all these pre-existing elements. It is something vastly higher, deeper, and larger than any one of them or than all of them put together.

For St. Paul the conception of Christ has been transformed by new and wonderful spiritual influences, so that as final expression is given to it in the Epistle to the Ephesians it has manifestly become something altogether new. The secret of this transformation is to be found as far back as the Epistle to the Galatians. There St. Paul, in reporting his controversy with St. Peter, says, 'We being Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, save through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified' (Gal. ii. 15, 16). The intense consciousness of sin, of its meaning and consequences, that had come to the Apostle had cast every other kind of evil into the background, or rather had made it to appear as a secondary consequence of sin. Christhood lay, not primarily in dealing with the subordinate evils that have resulted from sin, but with the sin that is at the root

of them. It is impossible to do any measure of justice to the Apostle's theology as a whole, and to his doctrine of Christ in particular, unless the vital significance of his consciousness of sin and the far-reaching results of that consciousness are taken fully into account. In the Epistle to the Ephesians the doctrine of sin is assumed rather than expounded. It is the state of experienced salvation from sin, together with the processes that bring it about, that occupies the foreground. Yet the full result of the doctrine—or rather the conviction of sin—is to be seen in the transformed conception of Christhood and Redeemership of which this Epistle is St. Paul's maturest statement.

Another important change follows as a matter of course upon this first transformation. St. Paul, as the passage in the Galatians shows, had been compelled by the consciousness of sin to renounce his presumed superiority over the Gentiles. The confession ' We ourselves also were found sinners ' (Gal. ii. 17) carries with it the birth of a universal and human consciousness which has shattered for ever the old pride of race and religion. In that deep and humanizing experience the spiritual foundation was laid which enabled St. Paul to receive the Apostleship to the Gentiles. In the realm of salvation the correlate of ' we ourselves also were found sinners ' is to be found in the declaration ' the Gentiles are fellow heirs ' (Eph. iii. 6). Hence the old nationalism of the conception of Christhood has passed away. In a sense, no doubt, the old conception had its universal aspect. The Christ of

the Prophets was to be an overcoming and universal King. But the essential meaning of the transformation now under consideration is something far beyond this. The relation of Christ to the Gentiles is as original and as direct as His relation to the Jew. It is true that the Jew has had the immeasurable advantage of the redemptive revelation and guidance that have culminated in Christ. Even this advantage they have had, not for themselves alone, but for the ultimate benefit of mankind. But in the spiritual and eternal, as above the historical and temporal sphere, the Christly office concerns the Gentiles as directly as the Jews. All the old distinctions have passed away.

This extension of the Christly office in itself carries with it its transformation. Its spirituality depends upon these two factors—the evangelical and the universal—which are bound up together. This again leads to a still higher transformation. The relationship in which Christ is seen to stand to sin, and therefore to mankind, involves a new and higher conception of His relationship to God.

It will be well to defer for a short time the examination in detail of the doctrine of the Epistle to the Ephesians in regard to the divinity of Christ. But it is clear at a glance that a salvation which concerns primarily, not the social and physical aspects of man's being, but his eternal relations with God, needs as its agent one who is much more intimately connected with the life and sovereignty of God than the agent of a mere material transformation need be.

Once more, the more eternal and intimate the relationship of Christ to the Godhead is seen to be, the more intimate and predominant become His relations to the universe—to its nature and history, nay more, to its origination and its final destiny. The universal sway of the Christ, just in so far as it is something diviner, more evangelical, and more strictly spiritual than had been realized in Jewish religion, becomes full of a higher reason, so that it appears in St. Paul's writings, as also in St. John's, to be part of the eternal nature of things. It is by taking full account of these four interrelated factors —the evangelical, the universal, the divine, and the cosmic—so deeply grounded in St. Paul's spiritual experience, that the exaltation and transformation of the conception of Christhood which appears in this Epistle must be explained.

Hence four features stand out prominently and in closest association in the portraiture of Christ which is given in the Epistle.

(1) First of all, He is human. The whole of St. Paul's doctrine hinges upon this, as we shall see. The standard of truth, for example, to which he appeals is 'As truth is *in Jesus*' (iv. 21), where the actuality, the historicity, and the living expression of the truth are all guaranteed by the humanity of the subject in whom it is revealed.

(2) Equally, the Christ is heavenly. His Christhood cannot be explained, according to the Epistle, by His historical career and influence, if limited to the sphere and term of His earthly existence.

He has 'ascended far above all the heavens, that

He might fill all things ' (iv. 10). Christ could not occupy the place He takes in the spiritual life of men and in their eternal destiny unless He had been exalted to this universal sovereignty over the universe, which at every point is involved in the spiritual destinies of mankind.

(3) Therefore, the human and universal is also the immanent Christ. His universal sovereignty and His spiritual indwelling are essentially related ; indeed, they are the two sides of the one reality. ' That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ' (iii. 17) is the Apostle's highest prayer, and as such represents his governing conception of the inward relationship of Christ to believers and of the spiritual meaning of His ' filling all things.'

(4) Thus Christ combines transcendence and immanence in His relation to the world. That is to say, He occupies a divine place and fills a divine function, both of which postulate His true divinity even apart from the Apostle's express doctrine on this subject.

The Epistle to the Ephesians presents to us, with peculiar fullness, the complete Fact of Christ. His office and His influence bring to bear upon believers and upon the world the unceasing spiritual effects of His history. In other words, according to St. Paul's doctrine, the whole of Christ's spiritual work is grounded in the facts of His history. These facts form a perfect and indivisible whole, each one of which in the unity of the rest has abiding importance both for the revelation of God and the redemption of the world.

St. Paul's attitude towards the gospel history has been the subject of great controversy. There are not wanting those who contend that the Apostle was so regardless of the historic facts of our Lord's life that even the whole of His human history might be blotted out, provided a real or imaginary spiritual personality were to remain as the underlying support of certain spiritual ideas, and the supposed source of certain spiritual experiences. It is certainly clear that St. Paul's interest lay not in the details of our Lord's life and teaching, but in certain outstanding facts, and in the personality which was made manifest in these facts and brought them to pass. This Personality, thus made manifest, stands for the revelation and accomplishment of the Divine Purpose by which all things are explained. It was natural, nay, inevitable, that one who had not been a disciple of our Lord's earthly ministry, and whose conversion was due, as he believed, to a heavenly experience, should fix his eyes upon the salient features, and not upon the details, of Christ's life. Yet it will not do to assume either ignorance or indifference in regard even to these details. Once and again the Apostle betrays greater familiarity with our Lord's teaching and earthly life than might have been supposed. For example, if the accuracy of the Acts of the Apostles be admitted, in his address to the elders of Ephesus he closes with an otherwise not recorded saying of the Lord Jesus, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts xx. 35).

The great account of the Resurrection-appear-

ances of our Lord given in 1 Cor. xv. is also in point and throws light upon the nature of the Apostle's interests in the historical narratives of our Lord's life. He was supremely concerned with the history and its evidence just in so far as they established for him the reality of the supreme events in which the Christhood was revealed and its redemptive office fulfilled. Everything else was for him of secondary importance. It is possible, nay probable, that he was aware of the work of the ordinary biographers of our Lord. His intercourse with St. Peter and his intimacy with St. Luke must have made him acquainted with the interests and with the inquiries out of which the second and third Gospels arose. Yet it is clear that St. Paul took comparatively little interest in such biographical endeavours. Nor is it an altogether easy task to adjust his representation of Christ to that of the Synoptic Gospels. But notwithstanding all this, the historicity of Christ is of the utmost importance to the Apostle. After all, St. Paul was, as he tells us, ' a Hebrew of the Hebrews ' (Phil. iii. 5). This means that his mind dwelt, not in the realm of ideas or even of abstract ideals, but in that of the decisive deeds by which the sovereignty of God was made manifest and His redeeming purpose fulfilled. Hence it would be as easy to cut out of the Old Testament prophets all reference to ' the Day of Jehovah ' or to the coming of the Messianic King as to exclude from the faith and doctrine of St. Paul the fundamental fact of a supreme historic personality who stands for divine redemption in

actual deed, and not merely in abstract thought or in subjective experience. Everywhere Christ stands out as a supernatural personality, known, indeed, by direct spiritual fellowship; but this fellowship grows out of and brings home the meaning of the well-authenticated facts of a historic life.

The Epistle to the Ephesians gives more than one most significant proof that this was the case. The very fact, for example, that the Apostle lays such stress upon redemption as carried out 'in the fullness of the seasons' (i. 10), and also his challenging question 'the Christ who ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?' (iv. 9), suggest this. But still more important is the description he gives of the truth. It is defined to be 'as truth is *in Jesus*' (iv. 21). The full meaning of these words must be considered later on. Meanwhile, it is most important to note that St. Paul is always most careful in the choice of the names of our Lord. Hence it is clear that he intends to convey to his readers that the truth as he receives it is grounded in and made manifest by an actual historic person, the Man Jesus. To belittle the importance of this for St. Paul would be to transform him into a Greek philosopher or an Oriental mystic, to the utter destruction of the distinctive Hebraic cast which marks his point of view from first to last.

Yet, as has already been said, St. Paul's emphasis is on certain outstanding facts of our Lord's life, and these facts altogether transcend His earthly limitations.

These facts, inseparably and vitally connected, constitute the complete Fact of Christ. This Fact is presented in two great passages. The first is that in which the Apostle speaks of the working of the strength of the Father's might 'which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all' (i. 20–23).

The second is the parenthetic explanation, 'Now this, He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things' (iv. 9, 10). The former of these two great passages assumes the earthly life of Christ in the statement that 'He was raised from the dead.' On this assumption it presents to us our Lord's life-history as a connected whole, which starts with His incarnation and is completed in His spiritual headship over His Church. In this complete whole the outstanding features are His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His universal sovereignty, and His spiritual headship over His Church. The more closely the history thus set forth is studied, the clearer it will become that for St. Paul each part is inseparable from the rest. To begin with, he

carefully chooses and emphasizes the title Christ, to show that the history which he records is that of a unique personality, standing in the most vital relations to the spiritual history of mankind. The choice of the title suggests at the outset that this history could not have happened to any one whose personality and whose spiritual position were less unique; but that in this case the marvel of the history ceases and it appears to be inevitable when due account is taken of this unique personality and of His relations to the spiritual life of mankind as giving effect to the eternal purpose of God.

The enlarged conception of Christhood, to which this Epistle gives final expression, makes the person and work of Christ of importance, not merely for the secular history of Israel, but for the providential ordering of the world. The spiritual destinies of mankind depend upon the Christ, and depend upon Him as the revelation of the highest spiritual truth, as the embodiment of that truth in the perfectly filial life which fulfils the ideal of mankind, and as the Redeemer of the world. All that happens to Him, therefore, happens to Him in His representative capacity. If His life-history negatives His revelation, who else shall give it authority and verification? If His perfectly filial life be quenched in the darkness of unrighteousness and death, who else shall justify and once more inspire the trust which was confounded in Him? If He fail to assert the victory of life over death, of God over brute force, where else can a Redeemer be found? When all this is taken into account, the Apostle's next

clause appears to be inevitable, 'Which He wrought in Christ *when He raised Him from the dead*.' Whatever may be said of the relationship of the Resurrection to the material order of things, it is in such coherence with the spiritual order as to be the essential consummation of the revelation, the signal verification of the filial confidence, the earnest of the redemption, without which Christ Himself becomes but a splendid illusion and the spiritual hope of man 'the baseless fabric of a dream.'

Yet if this were the end, it might appear that the Resurrection was merely an arbitrary miracle, serviceable perhaps for the confirmation of faith, if in such circumstances it could be believed, but standing in no necessary connexion with the spiritual history of the universe. Such a representation is far enough from the Apostle's mind. Hence he goes on to add that God 'made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.' The Resurrection is fulfilled by the Ascension, and the Ascension stands for the consummated life of Christ and His sovereign activity henceforth throughout the spiritual world.

It may be urged that this fact is far removed from any possibility of direct spiritual perception. It concerns a transcendent realm of which all human faculties must fall infinitely short. Such an objection would have little force for the Apostle, for had he not seen the Lord, directly revealed to his spirit and even to his senses in the glory of heavenly

Kingship? But his description goes far beyond such exceptional spiritual experiences, for the Apostle continues, 'He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.' Just as the spiritual position of Christ set before us at the outset gives the highest degree of probability to all that follows, so the spiritual outcome of His exaltation affords convincing evidence of its reality. The events that are taking place are the evident sign of His supremacy. And this supremacy becomes most clearly manifest in the life-history of the Church as a spiritual organism which is created, vitalized, and continuously directed by conscious fellowship with Christ as its Head. So intimate is the relationship between Him and it that He 'filleth all in all' as the life-principle in the living body. And, on the other hand, just as the body is the fulfilment of the head—subordinate to it throughout and yet the indispensable instrument of its purposes and the servant of its life—so the Church is the fullness of Christ; the instrument, yet more than the instrument, of His mind and will. In the Church the Christhood which has been fully expressed and achieved through death, resurrection, and ascension receives its spiritual consummation. This is for the Apostle the complete Fact of Christ. It is a rainbow arch, resplendent in beauty, harmonious in every part, springing from the earth, reaching to the heaven of heavens, and returning to earth again.

The second passage draws an inference from

the Fact of Christ as it is presented in the first. 'Now this, He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?' The Ascension presupposes the Incarnation and humiliation of Christ. This statement can only be understood in the light of the great passage in Phil. ii. 5–11, in which the self-emptying of Christ is described. Yet it carries the matter a stage farther. The humiliation of Christ and His obedience even unto death involves the tasting of those after-consequences of death, which are common to mankind. Incarnation, humiliation, and death, the Cross in its full meaning would all have been incomplete, had our Lord not thus 'descended into the lower parts of the earth.'

These two great passages show that in the Apostle's mind the earthly life of the historic Christ is only a segment of an infinite and heavenly whole which, while it transcends sense-perception, is revealed to the spiritual apprehension of faith and affects the inmost process of spiritual experience. Christ became manifest out of the larger universe which encompasses the visible world, and when His work was done He returned to that larger universe again. Nay more, throughout the whole progress of His earthly life He abides in direct and living relationship with this larger realm. His life is rooted and grounded in human and earthly history; yet it reveals a larger world of unseen reality and realizes the potentialities of that world in the transformation of human life.

The two sides of this complete and perfect whole

are essential in themselves and to each other. To deny the reality of either is equally to destroy the other. When the two aspects, the heavenly and the historic, are kept in view, due regard is paid both to the transcendence and to the immanence of God. How to combine the eternal perfection of God with His activity in purposing and directing the secular process by which His Kingdom is established in time will probably always remain a problem for human philosophy. Each aspect of the full truth is equally essential. How to combine them is the difficulty. Yet this difficulty becomes appreciably less when the doctrine of Christ presented by the Apostle is taken seriously. For then there is made manifest an indissoluble spiritual unity between the Father, as the eternal seat and source of all perfection, and the Son, who is at once the expression of this perfection, the light by which it is revealed, the energy by which it is realized, the personal activity by which it goes forth as love to create and consummate the world in which its fullness is to be revealed.

Moreover, the Epistle to the Ephesians does more than set forth Christ as revealing through His work the larger universe of which this world is but a fragment, and as unifying in complete coherence the eternal perfection of the Godhead with its historic manifestation. In addition, the historic and heavenly Christ is the ground of the spiritual life of men. In and through Him they realize to the full their earthly life by entering into the enjoyment of heavenly relationships. They ' sit together

with Christ in the heavenly places ' (ii. 6). So that their life in its twofold aspect answers to that of Christ. This life, in the larger and heavenly whole which is realized in believers, is the potential inheritance of all mankind. The meaning of this as it is unfolded in the Epistle must be considered later on. It is sufficient to note it now.

To conclude, the complete Fact of Christ contains the revelation that earth is ensphered by heaven, the material by the spiritual, man by God. It presents the eternal perfection of God as the goal towards which the universe advances. It gives assurance that the life of Christ, which is already ceaselessly reproducing itself in the life of believers, is the earnest of the complete emancipation and transformation of the world.

Hence Christ stands out in this Epistle as the goal and the explanation of history. He is the fulfilment of the divine purpose for which the world exists. He is God's secret told in ' the fullness of the seasons ' (iii. 9 and i. 10). The fulfilment of this purpose, the disclosure of this secret, in Christ, reveals the meaning and destiny of the world, by revealing the character and sovereignty of God. Christ is the culmination of human history. His appearance is the decisive act of God, for which all that has gone before is preparatory and of which all that follows is the consequence. His relation to this consummation is threefold. His perfection—as completely realizing those divine relations for which man was created—makes Him not merely the revelation of God, but the supreme achievement

of manhood. Apart from Him the divine ideal of manhood is without its earthly realization. In the next place, as Redeemer He saves the history of the world from the failure and perversion of sin. This subject is so important that it must be treated in the following chapter. In the third place Christ is not only the realization and the Redeemer of man, but the spiritual Life-giver. This also must be dealt with later on. What must be noted now is that our Lord's relation to human history as its culmination, as the unique realization of spiritual perfection, naturally suggests that His incarnation is not altogether brought about by human sin. The whole of His redemptive work as presented by St. Paul rests upon and draws its validity from His original relations alike to God, to the universe, and to mankind. No wonder that this problem suggested itself to the speculative intellects of mediaeval times. As originally raised, the suggestion may seem too abstract to be profitable. Yet most abstract discussions are suggested by vital aspects of experience. The whole treatment of the relationship of Christ to humanity both in this Epistle and in the Epistle to the Colossians suggests that our Lord draws His power to redeem man from the abnormal of sin because He represents the supernormal of a spiritual Headship, which by its activity and manifestation brings man to the normal life of holiness. The relation of Christ to man and to history, quite apart from sin, is therefore eternal and essential.

The manifestation of Christ constitutes indeed the

supreme crisis in human history. It is the sovereign gift and deed of God. It is an event so outstanding in its import that it fills the horizon and illuminates all else. Yet for this very reason Christ appears as the culmination of a living process which is completely revealed and justified in Him. His coming is conditioned, not by natural or even spiritual laws in themselves, but by the eternal purpose of God which serves itself of the laws which it lays down. Therefore, while the coming of Christ is decisive, it is not arbitrary. It is represented as the fulfilment, to which all that has gone before was preparatory. Hence the Fact of Christ reveals the nature and working of the sovereignty of God. Christ, with the redemption that is in Him, is indeed the gift of God's ' good pleasure ' (i. 9). But the riches of God's grace which He thus made to abound towards us (i. 7, 8) are ' in all wisdom and prudence.' The divine action is perfectly circumspect. Its methods appeal to and demand for their appreciation the spiritual and rational discernment He bestows. It springs out of the supremacy of love in God, which lays down the ends of love as the object of His sovereignty. But love can only triumph by spiritual means. Hence the continuity of history is interpreted from above and not from below. It represents, not the limitations prescribed by material forces, but the methods freely adopted by spiritual sovereignty. The laws of secular development, in so far as they are real, are founded upon and obey the authority of divine love working in wisdom ; not the other way about. Spiritual

law reigns in the natural world; not natural law in the spiritual.

And while the spiritual laws are laid down by the sovereign will of God as giving expression to His love in 'manifold wisdom,' the closest analogy to them is to be found not in mechanical, but in vital processes. Christ appears in 'the fullness of the seasons' (i. 10). Yet just as the fruitful harvests of earthly seasons do not exclude the voluntary activity of man, but welcome it and are increased by it, so there is '*a dispensation* of the fullness of the seasons'—a divine administration which is revealed in and takes advantage of the spiritual conditions that lead up to Christ. Indeed, the divine wisdom does not stand for merely external superintendence. Christ is not an addition to history from without, but is its fulfilment from within. The movement towards Him is an organic movement of life. He is its end and its vital principle. Hence He governs and informs it from first to last. This meaning is conveyed in the numerous passages which represent God's act of choice, His eternal purpose, His foreordination as being 'in Christ.' Here, indeed, is to be found the deepest part of St. Paul's teaching. It is true that this Epistle gives no explicit statement as to the personal pre-existence of Christ. As the culmination of human history He might be conceived as pre-existent only in the purpose of God, as the eternal ideal and goal towards which God works. Such a conception, however, fails to do justice to the implications that are contained in the Epistle. The very fact that Christ stands in such

an immanent and vital relationship, not only to mankind subsequently to His appearing, but to the history of mankind as leading up to His appearing, suggests that He is the Life-principle active in humanity and in the universe from the beginning.

This impression is borne out by the express teaching of the Epistle to the Colossians, which stands in the closest relationship to this Epistle. There what this Epistle throughout implies is distinctly affirmed, namely, that 'all things have been created *through Him*, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all hold together' (Col. i. 16, 17).

This doctrine of the pre-existence and immanence of Christ is required, as has been seen, by the relations in which He stands to man, as being the fulfilment of His being, and as giving the consistency of an ordered and living process to man's history.

But there is more besides. The impression produced by this Epistle is that of the responsiveness of the world into which Christ comes. It is true that the dark shadows of sin and its attendant evils are upon all things. Yet beneath the gloom we see, not irretrievable ruin, but the beginnings of a spiritual superstructure which is complete in Christ. The Fatherhood of God, for example, is revealed in the fatherhood of man (iii. 15). When speaking of the appearance of Christ as the revelation of 'the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God' (iii. 9), the Apostle takes special care to speak of 'God *who created all things*.' Surely these are suggestions that as human history leads up to Christ, whose appearance is the fulfilment, as well as the

redemptive vindication, of the divine purpose, so the creative wisdom and power of God have planned the universe to receive Him when He comes. His sovereignty, therefore, is not the conquest of an alien universe from without. It is the calling forth and satisfying of its potentialities from within. It is because this immanent and pervasive sovereignty of Christ throughout the universe, grounded in creation and completed in redemption, is so clearly grasped by the Apostle, that the triumph of Christ appears inevitable in this Epistle. The readers are raised above the clash of spiritual discords to anticipate the final harmony that springs out of the original constitution in and for Christ of all that is. At no point is freedom replaced by iron necessity. But in the centre of human history is a personality so divinely mighty and effectual, so vitally related to the universe from its beginning to its end, that His personal influence is in itself sufficient to secure the universal triumph of love for which the universe is prepared.

St. Paul uses one great expression to set forth the Fact of Christ as the substance and climax of divine revelation. He speaks of 'the Mystery' of Christ (Eph. iii. 4; see also i. 9, iii. 3, v. 32, and vi. 19), and of 'the dispensation' (the stewardship; literally, economy) 'of the Mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things' (iii. 9). Neither the word nor the sense in which it is used is peculiar to this Epistle among the writings of St. Paul. It is found in the same sense four times in the Epistle to the Colossians

(Col. i. 26, 27, ii. 2, iv. 3). What is still more important from the point of view of the authorship of the Epistle is that it is found in Rom. xvi. 25, where the Apostle's Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ is spoken of as 'the revelation of the Mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested.' In the same way St. Paul writes to the Corinthians describing himself and his fellow workers as 'ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God' (1 Cor. iv. 1; see also 1 Cor. ii. 1). Besides these passages numerous examples may be found of the use of the word with a more general significance and in a somewhat different application in other Epistles of St. Paul. In addition one striking example of its use is to be found in the document common to the three Synoptic Gospels. There mention is made of 'the Mystery of the kingdom of heaven,' or 'of God' (Matt. xiii. 11, Mark iv. 11, Luke viii. 10). Doubtless the instances of the more general use of the term that have been alluded to show that it had wide currency in the time of St. Paul, and was not restricted to its technical sense in the language of contemporary religion. Yet the associations which cluster round it in the Epistle to the Ephesians show that its stricter and more technical meaning was present to the mind of the Apostle as he wrote. The whole context associates the term with the gifts of revelation and illumination. It is expressly said, for example, that the Apostle's commission is '*to make* all men *see*,' or to give illumination to all men (iii. 9). Side

by side with this revelation and illumination goes the Apostle's insistence upon redemption and quickening as essentially bound up with it. In short, revelation, redemption, and life-giving power are inseparably joined together as the three specific gifts conferred by Christ. Moreover, these spiritual gifts are the foundation of a fellowship. Indeed, 'the Mystery of Christ' is described as conveying 'that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel' (iii. 6). Now, the conceptions that thus gather round or spring out of the Apostle's use of the term 'Mystery' are exactly those which were associated with the Mysteries in the current non-Christian religions. The time of the Apostle was fruitful in religious experiments. They were devised for the satisfaction of a sense of spiritual need too deep for the popular religions to satisfy. The intercourse of East and West which was brought about under the Roman Empire, the importation of new faiths from the East, the decline of local patriotism, the growth of a sceptical spirit, consequent upon the rapid intermingling of races with their incongruous faiths and customs—all tended to throw the individual back on himself, to make him seek a surer ground of personal conviction, a larger satisfaction of spiritual need, and the stronger support of a select spiritual fellowship. While great efforts were made by the Imperial Government to create religious bonds which should cement the new order of things, the conditions of the age led to the formation of

countless brotherhoods and other societies in which men of common beliefs and aspirations could find the support and solace of a common fellowship. From all these causes sprang the religions of the Mysteries which formed so remarkable a phenomenon in the age of St. Paul and afterwards. The various Mysteries differed greatly in detail and in moral elevation. It is impossible to deal with the subject here. But all were alike in certain outstanding features. All professed to communicate a higher secret to those who were specially initiated by preparatory and indeed sacramental rites. All promised illumination as the means, not merely of spiritual exaltation, but of immortality. And these mystic gifts were conferred by an ordered process or economy, were carefully guarded from the profane, and were the bond of a sacred freemasonry which distinguished the votaries from the common crowd.

St. Paul's teaching in this Epistle approximates in all these points to the religions of the Mysteries. The outstanding terms and conceptions by which he describes Christ and life in Him are the characteristic terms and conceptions of the Mystery religions. This marked feature of the Epistle is in keeping with all that appears elsewhere in regard to St. Paul's habit of mind and teaching. The great passage, 'To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might claim Jews: to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law,

not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some' (1 Cor. ix. 20–22), sets forth the Apostle's permanent attitude and the method of his preaching to men of diverse conditions. His address to the Areopagus recorded in Acts xvii. is an illustration of this. In it the Apostle took advantage of every point of contact between himself and his hearers. This attitude and method were not artificially assumed in order to gain a practical end. They sprang from an altogether deeper motive. Superficially they display the depth and breadth of St. Paul's sympathy with those whom he sought to win. His sympathy expresses, not merely the ardent desire to convince and save his hearers, but his power to discern and to appreciate everything that was good and true in their beliefs and in their aspirations. But something more than sympathy is involved. The Apostle occupies a position of complete assurance of the truth of Christ and of the essential relations of that truth to men. It is the satisfaction of their needs, the remedy for their sin, the end towards which they are guided by spiritual intuitions implanted in them by God. This assurance has manifold effects on the Apostle's temper. It enables him at once to recognize approximations and yet to emphasize distinctions. The address at Athens is an example of this, for after the Apostle has used every point of contact between himself and his

hearers he proceeds so to differentiate his message from their beliefs as to arouse the keenest opposition and ridicule from all save a small minority. Indeed, from the beginning to the end of the address St. Paul assumes the vantage-ground of an altogether higher standpoint, which carries with it both spiritual authority and discrimination. Exactly the same thing is true of the approximation contained in this Epistle. Those who are familiar with the religions of the Mysteries know how at every point they were entangled with superstitious and sensuous elements. The spiritual enthusiasm which was revealed in them never broke away from naturalism, and, therefore, never became completely moralized. Thus they displayed alike the urgency of spiritual need and the danger contained in such need when it is unable entirely to rise above the sphere of natural life and to establish itself upon truly spiritual and moral foundations. The yearning represented in the Mysteries was rather for quantity than for quality of life. It represented an intense desire to escape natural limitations and to gain immortality. The object sought was the satisfaction of blessedness more than the attainment of those higher conditions upon which blessedness depends. Hence St. Paul's teaching, even where it approximates most closely to the current ideals, rises in an almost startling way above them. To begin with, in the spiritual purity of his ethical teaching. When this Epistle is set side by side with what remains to us of the Mystery religions, the effect produced is that of the sudden appear-

ance of a snow-clad Alp, dazzling in purity and radiant in the sunlight, beyond the pine-dressed mountains that lie around and for the most part hide it from view.

And as the moral elevation of the Apostle is immeasurably superior, so the real essence of the teaching differs widely from the Mystery religions. 'The Mystery of Christ' is in God's keeping and not in man's. Even St. Paul's apostleship, while unspeakably important, makes him but a subordinate instrument of the sovereignty of God. The preparation for the revelation of the Mystery is not committed to earthly hands, but is carried on throughout the ages by the ceaseless and manifold wisdom of God. The quickening that comes to believers, even if connected with the communication of truth and the celebration of sacraments, has its cause in something yet higher than these. It comes from contact with the Christ, whose life-history is reproduced in believers by His own gracious act in the Spirit. Illumination goes side by side with and is conditioned by moral regeneration. The organs to which and through which it comes are spiritual and moral, rather than intellectual and emotional. These latter elements are not left out of account, but the spiritual exaltation of religion issues in moral regeneration. Once more, the non-Christian Mystery-religion stood for exclusiveness. Not indeed exclusiveness of race, for it owed its expansion to the breaking down of racial distinctions through the intermingling of peoples under the Roman Empire. But the ordinary Mystery-

religion tended rather to deny than to confirm the universal capacity of man. It was the religion of the few as opposed to the religion of the crowd. Here, again, St. Paul both approximates and distinguishes. He approximates when he speaks of 'the *unsearchable* riches' of Christ and of 'the dispensation,' the stewardship, of the Mystery. With equal or even greater significance he differentiates when he speaks of 'preaching,' proclaiming, these unsearchable riches 'to the Gentiles,' the outermost and unlikeliest of men. And he goes on to parallel this by speaking of bringing illumination to *all men*—'to make all men see what is the stewardship of the Mystery.'

When all this is taken into account it becomes plain that St. Paul, while freely availing himself of the suggestions associated with the Mystery religions, transforms them in so doing. They are all accommodated to the Fact of Christ. It was easy for the Apostle to make this use of them, because, as has been convincingly shown, all the main conceptions involved were familiar to readers of the Old Testament. The term 'mystery,' as applied to Christ in this Epistle, emphasizes the finality of the revelation contained in Him, treats it as the culmination of a preparatory process and as shedding the light of complete fulfilment on all that has gone before and all that exists around. Furthermore, the Fact of Christ contains this revelation and sheds this illumination because it stands in the most intimate and vital relations to the spiritual life which it awakes and satisfies. A new humanity is

thus created and bound together by ties of mystic fellowship with Christ.

The outline thus given of the Apostle's doctrine of Christ is of necessity brief. St. Paul gives to us no dogmatic definitions of His nature, divinity, and relations to the Godhead, but he supplies in full measure the material out of which such definitions are made. Christ is in an altogether unique sense the Son of God—'the Beloved' (i. 6). His Sonship is always carefully distinguished from that of believers and is the ground of their adoption. His Sonship alone is adequate to reveal the full meaning of the Fatherhood of God. It is so adequate to this high end that in revealing the Fatherhood of God it fully displays the glory of His holy character. The very Name of God henceforth connotes 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Christ, the Son, appears ever in closest association with the Father, above and over against all beside. His appearance 'in the fullness of the seasons' is the culminating event of human history. He achieved through His death, resurrection, and ascension supremacy over the universe. This supremacy is not that of authority and power alone. Christ is the transcendent law and the immanent life of all things. His work of redemption is not a local episode confined to men or even to the earth. The divine purpose is 'to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth' (i. 10). Thus the position and work of Christ, according to the Epistle, show Him to be in inmost union with God, in full command of

all the resources of the universe, and to have complete access in the Spirit to the hearts of men. The relations in which He stands to men, as realized already in believers and thereby shown to be potential in the case of all men, are not accidental, but are grounded in the divine constitution of things. From first to last, therefore, the functions which Christ exercises, the relations He sustains, and the resources He manifests are in the strictest sense divine. He is not the supernatural instrument of God; He is in such wise His representative and partner that His nature and work are inexplicable except on the ground of eternal and perfect union with God. No worship that is paid to Him can be excessive. As His present position in the spiritual life of man is the fulfilment of what was implicit prior to His incarnation, so no term can be assigned to His present lordship. There is no suggestion in the Epistle of any future abdication of His headship, such as might be inferred from the Apostle's statement elsewhere that 'when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all' (1 Cor. xv. 28). The fact that the Epistle to the Ephesians, which treats of the unbounded future with greater amplitude than any other of St. Paul's Epistles, contains no echo of this statement to the Corinthians suggests that the final subjection of the Son is to be understood as relating to the economic consummation of His redemptive work and not to any recession from His eternal place in the Godhead or

from the relations to the universe which rest upon it. The whole of the teaching of the Epistle in regard to Christ has its source, not in a speculative theory, but in a divine revelation which finds, calls forth, and satisfies the highest and deepest spiritual faculties. From first to last the Epistle brings its readers into the presence of one undivided Personality, co-extensive with the infinity and perfection of God, though made manifest in humanity. In a sense, as the Epistle to the Philippians shows, this manifestation involves a self-emptying or limitation (Phil. ii. 5–11). The Epistle to the Ephesians shows us the other side of this. The self-emptying is equally a self-fulfilment. There is for the Apostle no difficulty in adjusting the relations between the divine and the human in Christ, still less any demarcation of frontiers between the divine and human in His indivisible Personality. The doctrine of the Person of Christ thus presented does not anticipate subsequent philosophic discussions, but it should give the law to them. It may suffice to say that so far from there being any conflict between the divine and the human, that which brings home to us the true and strict divinity of Christ establishes equally His complete and perfect humanity. He could not be what He is or achieve what He does were He not at once truly God and perfectly man.

CHAPTER VII

REDEMPTION

Christ is the supreme fact and life in Christ the supreme experience which are set forth in the Epistle to the Ephesians. The way of Christ's manifestation, and, therefore, the form of the spiritual experience of Christ, are, according to the Epistle, that of redemption. It is true that the word is only used three times in the whole course of the Epistle. At the outset the Apostle speaks of the Beloved 'in whom we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses' (i. 7). Farther on, the sealing of the 'Holy Spirit of Promise' is said to be 'an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of His glory' (i. 14). The only other passage in which the word is used speaks of 'the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption' (iv. 30). The first passage is exactly paralleled in the Epistle to the Colossians (i. 14).

The fact, however, that the word redemption is so rarely used in the Epistle to the Ephesians, or for that matter in the other writings of St. Paul, does not mean that the conception conveyed by it is of

secondary importance either in itself or in St. Paul's interpretation of the gospel. On the contrary, it appears in such connexions and colours so deeply St. Paul's view, not only of the way in which the life in Christ is attained, but also of the conditions of that life in itself, that it must certainly be held to be the dominant conception of this Epistle. The slightest consideration of the three passages shows the vast range of experience that is contained between what is described in the first passage and that which is set forth in the other two. In the first passage redemption is defined as being 'the forgiveness of our trespasses.' The second passage, however, speaks of 'the redemption of God's own possession' as marking the final outcome of the work of Christ. This outcome is reached, according to the third passage, at 'the day of redemption,' which can mean nothing else than that Day of the Lord which has such prominence in the prophetic teaching of the Old Testament, and which, like the Messianic ideal, finds both a permanent place and a thorough-going spiritual transformation in the New. Between the first and the second, therefore, comes the wonderful range of spiritual experience described in the Epistle, and still more the great series of divine operations which are inseparably connected with redemption and are parts of its fullness. The initial act of redemption, the forgiveness of sins, is connected in the Apostle's opening statement with the universal purpose of God 'to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth' (i. 10). Forgiveness is associated with the sealing

of 'the Holy Spirit of promise' (i. 13). Believers in Christ who have received through Him the grace of forgiveness come to experience the quickening power of God (ii. 5). The standard and promise of that power are given in the resurrection and exaltation of our Lord (i. 18–23). In short, if life in Christ takes its rise in a great act of grace and mercy, it is marked by a continuous putting forth of life-giving power which, while it never sets aside human freedom, is so far-reaching and sovereign in its transforming influence that those who experience it are said to be God's '*workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus for good works' (ii. 10).

Nor is this all. The life of Israel in the Old Testament is governed by the conception of the Covenant relationship with God. This Covenant relationship, while inaugurated with Abraham, was only fully established with the People by the redemption from Egypt. God's redemption and appropriation of His people were consummated by the Covenant into which He entered with them. This is set forth with peculiar depth and tenderness by the prophet Hosea under the imagery of the marriage relationship. God redeemed His people from bondage, wooed them and wedded them in the desert, that He might establish with them the covenant of marriage which His mercy and long-suffering treats as being, despite their unfaithfulness, indissoluble. Hence the Pentateuch represents the redemption from the bondage of Egypt as issuing in a solemn covenant between Jehovah and His people. The sacrifices habitually used in ratifying human

covenants are celebrated on a higher and larger scale in the ratification of the covenant between Jehovah and His people. The slaying of the victim, the sprinkling of its blood, the sacrificial feast, were all used in the establishment of an ordinary covenant. The expression 'to cut the covenant' was the technical term: it had reference to the severing of the covenant victim in inaugurating and confirming the covenant agreement. Clearly the peace-offering in the wilderness, when the representatives of the people 'beheld God, and did eat and drink' (Exod. xxiv. 11) and its sequel in the continuous peace-offerings which constituted the very heart of the Old Testament sacrifices, were naturally associated with the supremacy of the Covenant relationship. Fellowship with Jehovah was on the terms of the Covenant, and, in its full enjoyment, rested upon His historic act of redemption in bringing His people up out of Egypt.

All this must be borne in mind in examining the statement of the Epistle to the Ephesians that our redemption in Christ is 'through His blood.' The converted Gentiles who have now been brought into the fellowship of Christ's Church are reminded that they 'are called Uncircumcision, in the flesh, made by hands' (ii. 11). The Apostle goes on to say that previous to their conversion they were 'separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ'

(ii. 12, 13). The Apostle further declares that Christ ' is our peace,' that ' the middle wall of partition ' has been broken down, that both Jew and Gentile are now reconciled ' in one body unto God through Christ,' and that they constitute a spiritual body of men who, through Christ, have ' access in one Spirit unto the Father ' (ii. 14–22). It is clear that, throughout, the Old Testament conception of redemption as issuing in a covenant absorbs the mind of St. Paul and governs his whole view of life in Christ. The Catholic Church, composed of believers in Christ, is the abiding fulfilment of the promise and foreshadowing contained in the spiritual privileges of the historic community of Israel. Thus the conception of redemption moulds the thought of the Apostle throughout the whole course of the Epistle. Redemption is the keyword to the whole.

One outstanding feature should, above all, be borne in mind. Redemption is throughout conceived by the Apostle as God's appropriation of His redeemed people for Himself. Of course this was the case with the Old Testament. Jehovah, as He said through Moses, bare His people on eagles' wings, *and brought them unto Himself* (Exod. xix. 4). The basis assumed by all the prophets for the instruction, rebuke, and exhortation of the people is that they are the inheritance of Jehovah—His possession, acquired by a costly act of grace, that they might glorify Him in the fulfilment of His holy purpose. The rightful claim of God is treated as the presupposition of His gracious act towards His people.

The same great note of divine sovereignty and appropriation is struck throughout the Epistle to the Ephesians. First of all, reference is made to the foreordination and the good pleasure of God's will (i. 5). The ultimate goal of redemption is that God may come into His ' own possession, unto the praise of His glory ' (i. 14). Later on the Apostle prays that ' the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of *His calling*, what the riches of the glory of *His inheritance* in the saints ' (i. 18). In short, God's glory and not man's need shapes the Apostle's thought in a way that manifests at once how he inherits the grandest conception of the Old Testament and finds a loftier and more far-reaching revelation of it in Christ.

Yet just as God's appropriation in the Old Testament, while primarily the act of His holy Sovereignty, was a deed of grace wrought out in mercy and compassion, so in the Epistle. Hence we are told of the ' riches of His grace ' (i. 7), of how ' God being rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us . . . quickened us together with Christ ' (ii. 4, 5). The act of appropriation can only be carried out by a deed of mercy which establishes such spiritual relations with God as enables Him to come into His own and to exert the full sway of His love over the personality of believers. Thus it is just because God's appropriation of men must be spiritual and gracious that His redemption is defined as consisting in ' the forgiveness of our trespasses,' that side by side with forgiveness goes our ' adoption as sons unto Himself ' (i. 5), and that this appropria-

tion is wrought out by all those processes of love which bring men into inmost fellowship with Himself.

The term redemption suggests as the most essential part of its meaning an act of power or purchase by which the redeemed are delivered from an alien bondage. Hence the first question that must be answered is, From what bondage are believers in Christ redeemed? The answer to this question furnished by the Epistle is by no means simple, although it will be found to be entirely coherent. Exposition will only be on safe ground if it is guided by St. Paul's definition. As has already been seen, he speaks of 'our redemption' as being 'the forgiveness of our trespasses' (i. 7). It is clear, therefore, that he has, first of all, in mind a state of disordered and unfulfilled relationships towards God. But as the exposition proceeds it becomes dominated by another conception. The readers are told that they 'have been *dead* through their trespasses and sins' (ii. 1), and that God 'being rich in mercy, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus' (ii. 4, 5). Here the original state from which believers have been delivered is described as not only a total suspension of the functions of spiritual being, but a suspension which involves active corruption as well as complete inability. The condition in which they were originally found was in itself past all hope. This, however, is not the whole of the description. St. Paul passes on to say that in this state of spiritual

death his hearers 'aforetime *walked according to the course of this world*, according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind' (ii. 2, 3). Hence there is an underworld of spiritual darkness and tyranny in which those who have not found redemption pass an existence which has its own forms of activity, though it is one of spiritual death. But at this stage the Apostle returns to the point from which he sets out. The end is in conformity with the beginning. The fruit of disordered relationships with God is to be seen in all these consequences, but the outstanding feature of the situation is that, prior to redemption, the Apostle's readers were 'by nature children *of wrath*, even as the rest' (ii. 3). These four elements must be brought together. The state of death and of bondage follows from unfulfilled and disordered relationships with God, and this perversion exposes men continuously to the divine wrath.

The two terms which are used in the description—trespasses and sins—correspond to the two outstanding elements of the case. 'Trespasses' represent the accumulated transgressions of divine law, which spring out of and give effect to disordered relations with God. 'Sins' stand for the same evil dispositions and deeds viewed as a falling short of the divine standard set for men both by the transcendent law of God and, therefore, by the immanent nature of man.

For the purpose of exposition it will be best to begin with the state of bondage which the Apostle describes. His readers, it is said, had ' walked according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience ' (ii. 2). Clearly the Apostle conceives a usurped dominion which has established its own order of things under a personal principle of evil. This personal principle he describes as ' the Prince of the Power of the Air.' It is evident that St. Paul's teaching is in a measure governed by the current conceptions of his times. The men of his day were spirit-ridden. They believed that their life was affected for good or for evil at every turn by the activity of benevolent or malevolent demons. And just as St. Paul held, like his Jewish contemporaries, that there is a hierarchy —a graduated order—of heavenly spirits, so for him the powers of darkness were under the supremacy of a Prince. Further, the realm over which this ruling Prince of Evil exerts his sway is the air. Here is an obvious survival of the ancient mythologies which were wrought out of ignorance and fear. And not only so, the survival of an ancient poetry which discerns not merely similarity and parallelism, but even identity between the phenomena of spiritual and of physical existence. The blackness of the threatening storm-cloud, the turbulence, fitfulness, and destructive power of the winds, all suggest to the primitive and unscientific mind either the wrath of a Deity or the conflict of lawless and malign spirits. Such suggestions live on in poetry and superstition

long after they have been superseded for the reason. Descriptive language falls back upon them when they have altogether ceased to arouse superstitious dread. It must, therefore, remain somewhat uncertain how far St. Paul really entertained the cruder views which still held sway over the majority even of the best educated minds of his generation in every race. The question is not so important as at first sight may appear. It cannot be thought surprising if in this matter as in others St. Paul's teaching reflects the conditions of his age and contains superficial elements that have now become obsolete. The really vital question is whether these elements are of the essence of his teaching or whether they are merely the accidental clothing of great spiritual truths which remain permanently valid, although the form in which they are presented may have become remote from an imagination that is controlled by the scientific knowledge of modern times.

1. As to this, it is clear that the Apostle's teaching contains four essential elements. First of all, evil presents itself as an order of things. The word 'course' means literally 'age.' Under this time-figure the Apostle thinks of a dispensation, system, or order of things *which fills this age,* characterizing it and lasting throughout it. In the next place, this order is tainted throughout with the spirit of evil. Nay more, it is controlled and fashioned by it. Not only so, but the tyranny of evil is so pervasive and overwhelming in its manifestations as to present at first sight the appearance of being unqualified and unchecked. And, finally, this prevalence of evil

in the existing order is due to the activity of a personal principle. It is explained, not by a tendency of things in themselves, whether through inherent imperfection or perversity. Nor is it essentially bound up either with physical nature or with the limitations of individuality in themselves. It is the result of a malign will exerting its influence in and through the hidden ranks of kindred spirits and infecting mankind with sinful perversity.

Such teaching runs counter both to the philosophy and to the shallow optimism of modern times. Yet the prejudice against it, when closely examined, appears not to be so rational as it at first sight appears. Of all assumptions one of the most unlikely is the supposition that man is the culmination of all spiritual being in creation. Such an assumption suits materialism far better than any system which fixes the seat of personality in a spiritual nature that is neither a mere product of material organization nor explicable in its terms. Yet if the universe be peopled with spirits intermediate between God and man, what ground is there for the confidence that they are all beneficent? The presence of spiritual and material evil in mankind is an obvious and terrible reality. What reason can be given for assuming, on any spiritual theory of the universe, that moral evil is limited to man? Furthermore, the phenomena of spiritual suggestion have been interpreted in all ages and by all races of mankind as the result of supernatural agencies, whether good, bad, or of mixed quality. It is easy to gather up all these suggestions under the general heading of

so-called 'subliminal consciousness.' Yet this explanation of the phenomena is rather an impressive name to cover our ignorance than a luminous rendering of our knowledge. Moreover, the deeper and greater spiritual personalities of history have never shared the shallow optimism which makes light of evil either in the spiritual or in the physical order and superciliously bows the devil out of existence. Hence, even so far as the personality of evil is concerned, St. Paul's teaching may yet not only command the faith but challenge the reason of mankind.

2. In the second place, it should be noted that the Apostle gives throughout a purely spiritual and ethical interpretation of evil. If it be contended or conceded that in many respects he accepted current beliefs which are now regarded as unscientific and even superstitious, what is remarkable is that he has so completely transformed them. There are no traces of anything that is either childish or magical in his doctrine. All is raised to the highest level. Whatever may be the cause of the controlling power of spiritual and moral evil, its nature stands out distinctly in its spiritual significance. It is the failure to fulfil, or the falling away from, the personal relations to God upon which both the holiness and the healthfulness of human nature depend. In short, holiness and moral healthfulness are practically equivalent throughout this Epistle and in all St. Paul's teaching. The tragedy of man's actual condition lies in a state of failure and of 'trespasses,' which is the inevitable result

of the destruction of the true spiritual relationships that should exist between God and man. Such failure is not only negative. It presents itself, not so much as a lack of features that should be present, but as a positive state of the mind, the affections, and the will, above all of the personality which manifests itself through them all.

3. In the third place, this spiritual and moral perversity is prevailingly a condition of unruly and destructive impulses. It belongs to the 'sons of disobedience.' Such are swayed by the lusts of the flesh, 'doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind' (ii. 2, 3). The very suggestion contained in the descriptive title 'the Prince of the Power of the Air' brings into prominence the turbulence and destructiveness of such inordinate desires and affections. Lawlessness and self-pleasing which break all bounds and violate the true order of life —these are the essential marks of spiritual evil.

4. Yet, dark though this condition and outlook appears, it is not the whole truth of the spiritual situation. The power of evil is, after all, only 'the Prince of the Power of the Air.' Mighty and destructive as this may be, it is limited in its range. Just as the air is ensphered by the heavens, so the sway of 'the Prince of the Power of the Air' is hemmed in and limited on every side by the sovereignty of 'God who created all things' (iii. 9). And this ruling fact of the situation must be spiritually interpreted. Evil is controlled, not by the mere force even of the will and power of God, but by the superior authority and power of a spiritual

law and a spiritual nature, overshadowing and underlying the power of evil, not only transcendently but immanently in the heart of man. Beyond the disturbances of the air is the calm serenity of the heavens. And beyond the sway of spiritual evil is to be discerned a spiritual constitution of human personality, which, while it must be redeemed and quickened and raised into newness of life, yet remains salvable. That is to say, it yet contains within itself the potentialities of goodness and the power to respond to the grace and mercy of God. Such appears to be the essential teaching of St. Paul as to the bondage of evil.

The sway of evil, however, is described, not merely as a state of perversity and disobedience, but as one of death and corruption. The former treats sin from the standpoint of the law against which it transgresses. The latter deals with the subject from the standpoint of life, the powers of which the sinful man fails to enjoy, the functions of which he fails to fulfil. And to the Apostle this is not merely a case of defective vitality, of weakened spiritual constitution. The failure is so complete that it can only be described as that of death outright. It is so in three respects—namely, insensibility, helplessness, and corruption. Those who are ' dead through trespasses and sins ' are thereby shut out from the whole realm of spiritual life and well-being. They fail to apprehend its realities or to pursue its objects. Nay more, they are powerless to apprehend and to attain to them. If any desire after them manifests itself, it remains in-

effectual. The spiritual and moral condition that results reveals the sway of corruption. Spiritual impotence and perversity are accompanied by morbid departures from holy and healthful living. Such is the picture in broad outline. It represents the salient features and the overwhelming disaster of the spiritual situation. It answers both to the Apostle's memory of his own condition before he attained to life in Christ and to his observation of the condition of others. It is, above all, true of the moral condition of the Gentile world as it is described both in this Epistle and in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

At the same time, the Apostle must be allowed himself to qualify his own doctrine on the subject. The contrast between the past and the present is nothing short of that between death and fullness of life. Yet this contrast must not be pressed until it involves an absolute psychological contradiction. The classical account of St. Paul's own experience of spiritual death, given with profound insight and with careful psychological accuracy, is found in Rom. vii. And this is the summing up of it: 'I find then the law, that, to me who would do good, evil is present. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me *out of this body of death*?' (Rom. vii. 21–24). This condition manifests a tragic discord and a helpless inability to end it.

The probability appears to be rather that the law of sin will eventually destroy even the moral judgement on the side of goodness than the other way about. Yet it is clear that some measure of spiritual life and activity is present and that it has never been absent. The testimony of religious faith credits this inner approval of goodness and desire after it to the grace of God, and treats the spiritual personality as being in bondage to the law of sin which is in the members. At the same time, the very fact that such higher judgement and desires exist shows that beneath the helplessness and corruption which are dominant there are points of contact with God without which the situation would indeed be hopeless. We must, therefore, interpret the figurative description of death by the help of St. Paul's careful description of the actual state of those who are said to be subject to it, and must not blot out the essential features of their condition by pressing the figurative description too far.

Above all, the condition whether of bondage or of death is plainly consequential. The heart of the situation is only reached when we rise to the Apostle's starting-point and treat the evil of man—his sin, his guilt, his inability and wretchedness—as due to unfulfilled and disordered relations with God. Their nature is the true explanation of all that follows. Now, as this Epistle presents the matter to us, the failure and disorder of the past is apprehended as in contrast to the rectification and fulfilment of the present. St. Paul writes from the standpoint of the new experience of son-

ship in and through Christ. The fullness and glory of the new life occupy the foreground alike of his own consciousness and of his exposition. This present consciousness sets up the new standard by which the past is judged and condemned. It is in the light of the new righteousness that the old disobedience is seen in its hideousness. The exultant power and blessedness of the new life shows how utter was the old death. But this new life is one of sonship—that is, of fulfilled relationship to God. It has two aspects. To begin with, it is something in advance of all that was spiritually possible before Christ came. From the standpoint of righteousness and of the covenant Abraham is treated by St. Paul in his earlier Epistles as being the exemplar and the father of all who subsequently believe in Christ. But in this Epistle Christ and the life in Christ are treated as a 'mystery which from all ages has been hid in God who created all things' (iii. 9). It has only been revealed in 'the fullness of the seasons.' The new relationship of sonship, grounded in and conformed to that of 'the Beloved,' represents a fullness of spiritual possibilities which has not been available hitherto. It is the consummation of a spiritual promise which only comes to its own in and through Christ. But, on the other hand, this fulfilment involves a rectification and restoration. Redemption from bondage and resurrection from death are the immediate and normal consequences of restoration to God. Elsewhere the Apostle's watchwords in describing this restoration are justification and reconciliation.

But in this Epistle he defines redemption as being 'the forgiveness of our trespasses.'

The restoration and perfecting of the relationships of sinful man with God can only come through a divine act of forgiveness. But forgiveness involves such restoration and perfecting. It is inconceivable and indeed impossible that God should blot out their trespasses and then leave men to themselves. His relationship to them is so unique in its spiritual import, in its transcendence and immanence, that the removal of discord carries with it the restoration of harmony. The ending of rebellion carries with it the renewal of fellowship. Man's relationship to God can never be accidental. God is emphatically He 'with whom we have to do.' 'In Him we live and move and have our being.' Directly, therefore, the cause of alienation is removed through 'the forgiveness of our trespasses,' the precious manifestation of God, with its inflow of life, and light, and love, must needs follow. We may say 'must needs,' not in the sense of natural necessity, but by reason of the sovereign Fatherhood which, of the free grace that is essential to it, goes forth to establish filial relations directly the spiritual obstacle to them has been removed. Therefore, all that follows throughout this Epistle, as St. Paul describes the process of salvation and the blessedness it imparts, is implicitly contained in 'the forgiveness of our trespasses.' Hence, also, this forgiveness in itself may be treated as the equivalent of the whole process of redemption, which is carried on to its perfection

at 'the day of redemption.' For all that follows upon forgiveness is contained in and conditioned by forgiveness. Herein is to be found the very heart of St. Paul's evangelical teaching. There is no such thing as a contingent forgiveness, waiting to be made final by the accumulation of our own merit in reparation for sin. Acceptance with God is not deferred until men have won it for themselves, even by means of a prevenient grace which enables them to attain it. Nor is forgiveness conditional or provisional. Such conceptions, which at an early date found an entrance into the teaching of the Church and were elaborated in the Roman system, are in direct contradiction to the teaching of the Apostle. Forgiveness is neither deferred nor dealt out occasionally; nor is the assurance of it withheld from the recipient. All doctrines which involve such limitations fall short of any adequate apprehension of the immediacy and intimacy of the relations between God and man. The barrier is removed by a plenary act of mercy. The benefits of that act may be withdrawn if the conditions on which it becomes valid are destroyed. Even the forgiven should, therefore, continue to pray, as our Lord has taught us, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' since in doing so they are perpetually reaffirming the conditions upon which forgiveness depends. But in itself our redemption is extended to us once for all, alike in the work of Christ by which it is brought about and in the blessing of forgiveness in and through which it is enjoyed.

Hence the train of immediate consequences

which follows upon the act of forgiveness. The Apostle goes on to say that in Christ 'we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will; to the end that we should be unto the praise of His glory, we who had before hoped in Christ: in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation,—in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of His glory' (i. 11–14). The phrase 'we who had before hoped in Christ' has reference to the Jewish believers; the 'ye' to the Gentile converts whom the Apostle is addressing. But in the case of both, a gracious appropriation to God by the act of God Himself followed upon forgiveness. Just as Israel became a peculiar people, so that God is reported by Hosea to have said, 'I called My Son out of Egypt' (Hosea xi. 1), so those who receive the forgiveness of their trespasses receive therewith 'adoption as sons through Jesus Christ' unto God (i. 5), and become a heritage unto Him. The process is not at once complete. As yet the redeemed have only received an 'earnest of their inheritance.' Only as they come into its fullness will God receive His own possession in them in its entirety. But even now they have been 'sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise' as the pledge that this process will be carried to its consummation and as the means by which this will be brought about.

This appropriation is, however, fatherly. It is a distinct act of grace which introduces believers to a status which had never been realized before and the possibility of which had been set aside by sin. This status is that of sons. The act of appropriation, while it enforces a sovereign claim, is an act of love. It gains its end, not by suppressing, but by perfecting freedom, the freedom which makes men God's fatherly heritage in love.

The Apostle's first prayer, therefore, on behalf of his readers is that through 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation' (i. 17) they may come to understand the wonderful meaning of this divine relationship that has been established in Christ. The opening words of the prayer speak of 'the knowledge' of God (i. 17). By this is meant not any mere formal acquaintanceship with Him, but that close spiritual intimacy which the Old Testament understands when it speaks again and again of 'knowing' God. None can know Him in the sense of this prayer without having a deep spiritual experience of the meaning of the fatherly-filial relationship which takes its rise in the act of forgiveness. So the Apostle goes on to pray, 'Having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe' (i. 18, 19). These words must be examined subsequently in another reference. Meanwhile, it is necessary to note that they reproduce exactly the same features as those

with which we have already dealt. St. Paul speaks of '*His* calling' and of '*His* inheritance.' The boundless promise that is held out comes in the form of a divine calling with its sovereign command. As men respond to it they become God's inheritance. Yet the manner of God's appropriation is that of filial fulfilment and joyous satisfaction. Hence those who are its objects come to learn what is 'the *hope*' of His calling, and what '*the riches* of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.' Saintship means consecration to the exclusive service of God, but this condition is one which fills men with exultant hope of the boundless riches that are contained for them in this state of consecration and in it alone. And contained in it just because it is a fatherly act which gains its own end not at the expense either of personal freedom or self-realization, but by the satisfaction of both in the life of sonship and service.

The immediate result of the restoration and fulfilment of true relations between God and believers through the forgiveness of their trespasses and their adoption as sons is that they experience the working of God's power upon them (i. 19). The standard of that power is that set by its exercise in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The Apostle prays that his readers may know what is 'the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places,' &c. (i. 19,

20). While their experience of the power of God is not at present adequate either to its strength or to its purpose, it is at all events most real and effective. For the Apostle continues, 'And you did He quicken, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins' (ii. 1), and proceeds to say that 'God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus' (ii. 4–6). Hence our Lord's Resurrection is not merely the measure of God's power towards believers, but its type. It is thereby represented as a vital, or rather as a revitalizing, energy. At first sight it might seem that the power of God as it wrought in the Resurrection of our Lord and as it is manifested in the quickening of believers works in two totally dissimilar spheres. The Resurrection of Christ appears to be a physical phenomenon, whereas the quickening of believers is purely spiritual. Doubtless the preponderating element differs in each case. Moreover, the spiritual and moral quickening which comes to those who were dead through their trespasses can have no counterpart in the case of the sinless Christ. Yet it would be altogether a mistake to suppose that St. Paul treated our Lord's Resurrection as a merely physical representation or analogy of what is involved in the spiritual resurrection of believers. In the case of our Lord it is clear that the physical process of resurrection and

ascension is interpenetrated by spiritual elements. Our Lord's exaltation to God's 'right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come,' is not merely spatial, nor does it represent a merely external authority. The same is true of His universal sovereignty and His headship 'over all things to the Church, which is His body.' Our Lord's Resurrection is the outward and visible clothing of a spiritual process by which He comes to His heavenly and universal sovereignty. The physical miracle is not thrown out of relation to the spiritual development, nor is there any disproportion between the one and the other. It takes great and thorough-going spirituality to apprehend St. Paul's view of our Lord's Resurrection. In the same way the spiritual quickening which comes to believers in Christ has definite physical consequences. It marks their bodies out as destined to share in the quickening (see Rom. viii.). It is fulfilled in new moral qualities which have an incalculable effect upon the whole range of the earthly life of which the body is the medium and instrument. Neither in the case of our Lord nor in that of His followers is there any hard or abstract separation between the spiritual and the physical. They must neither be separated nor confused. In the case of our Lord's Resurrection the quickening power of God brings Him by a normal process to the culmination of His spiritual perfection and influence. In the case of believers the divine

power is the remedy for the morbid helplessness and perversity of sin. As the Apostle says later on, it involves the putting away of the old man and the putting on of the new (iv. 22, 23). All this means a process of spiritual and moral renovation which enables believers to realize their capacity for entering into the heavenly and divine relations that are now open to them. Thereby also they come into complete moral control of all the relationships and interests of a healthy life on earth.

The quickening through which all this comes to believers is not due to any exercise of divine power that is apart from Christ. Both the power and the quickening are in Christ. 'He hath quickened us together with Christ' is the Apostle's statement (ii. 5). The quickening of Christ contained by anticipation and potentially the quickening of believers. The quickening of believers is an experience of union with Christ in 'the power of His resurrection.' This is an example of the most characteristic doctrine of St. Paul, that of the union of believers with Christ, not only in His Spirit, but in the outstanding facts of His history —His death, His resurrection, His exaltation, His future return. This doctrine is set forth in Gal. ii. 20, Rom. vi., and Col. iii. 1–4. What is now to be noted, however, is that on the forgiveness of their trespasses and their adoption as His sons, God so takes possession of men that His power brings them into complete and joyful realization of a transcendent and divine fellowship in Christ which not only gives them their 'citizen-

ship in heaven' (Eph. ii. 19; Phil. iii. 30), but orders all their relationships on the earth. The nature of this new life must be more fully considered in subsequent chapters. For the present it is enough to sum up by saying that forgiveness and adoption issue in spiritual resurrection and exaltation, in complete emancipation and enlargement of spirit, and in the experience of a process of renewal which is the earnest of its fulfilment at 'the day of redemption' (iv. 30).

It is necessary, in the next place, to inquire as to the means by which redemption is wrought out. It has already been seen that its sphere is in Christ, that its source is in the riches of God's grace, that it achieves the fulfilment of His eternal purpose, that it consists in the forgiveness of our trespasses, and that it is made effectual by the exercise of the quickening power which God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. The way in which this power is exerted upon men will need further investigation later on. Before this inquiry can be entered on, however, it is necessary to ascertain the ground upon which God grants the forgiveness of trespasses in which redemption consists. Is it an unconditional act of mercy, without cost on the part of God or sacrifice on the part of man? That it proceeds from and gives effect to a sovereign act of grace has become abundantly clear already. Whatever may be the conditions laid down, they are so clearly ordained and fulfilled by God Himself as to enhance and not to diminish the glory of His grace. Any representation which

would suggest that redemption is procured either by man or on behalf of man outside the act and gift of God our Father would violate the whole teaching of the Apostle. The source, the means, and the accomplishment of redemption from its initial act to its final consummation must be treated as the free act of God Himself, if the Apostle's picture of the fatherly sovereignty is to be maintained and understood as he lays it down. Notwithstanding this, one indispensable condition is asserted or assumed again and again throughout the Epistle. In Jesus Christ, the Beloved, 'we have our redemption *through His blood*, the forgiveness of our trespasses' (i. 7). Again, it is stated that 'now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh *in the blood of Christ*. For He is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that He might create in Himself of the twain one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and He came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh: for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father' (ii. 13–18). Again, the Apostle reminds his readers how Christ 'loved the Church and gave Himself up for it' (v. 25). Side by side with these quotations must be put the parallel passage in the Epistle to the Colossians, 'For it was the good pleasure of the Father that

in Him should all the fullness dwell ; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of the Cross ; through Him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens. And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreproveable before Him ' (Col. i. 19–22). Further on, in referring to ' the forgiveness of our trespasses ' the Apostle proceeds to say that Christ has ' blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us : and He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the Cross ; having put off from Himself the principalities and the powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it ' (Col. ii. 14, 15). In the passages quoted from this Epistle the statements about our Lord's death appear to have a somewhat narrower scope than those in the Epistle to the Colossians. Emphasis is laid upon the blood of Christ and upon His Cross as bringing Jew and Gentile nigh to God and reconciling them both in one body unto God. All this is closely in keeping with the teaching of the Epistle to the Colossians. But the latter Epistle makes a noteworthy extension by treating our Lord as having through His Cross ' put off from Himself the principalities and powers ' of evil. This addition, as will shortly be seen, throws important light on the doctrine of Atonement contained in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

In approaching St. Paul's doctrine on this subject, several considerations must be borne in mind. In the first place, he is touching upon the deepest and most vital elements of his own experience. If it be certain that when he speaks generally of being 'in Christ Jesus' he is expressing what is most characteristic in his own experience, it is equally certain that when he goes on to specify 'through the blood of Christ' he comes to that which is for him its central and most vital element. His doctrine of the Atonement is not the speculative solution of a problem or the maintenance of a tradition. He describes the spiritual effect of an historic fact, explains the result of a personal relationship. In the next place, it should be borne in mind that this Epistle contains what is practically the Apostle's final statement on the subject. It must be interpreted in the light of his earlier writings. But prominence must also be given to the immediate context of the doctrine, for the context supplies the dominant suggestions in the light of which the subject is viewed. It is necessary, therefore, to unravel the various factors which combine to furnish the intellectual setting in which the spiritual experience is placed.

To begin with, it is clear that for the Apostle the death of Christ could not be regarded as accidental or as secondary in its importance. Both the sovereignty of God and the history which constitutes the complete fact of Christ make it impossible that the Cross should be either a casual or an indecisive event. On the contrary, it stands

in essential relations to the accomplishment of the divine purpose and to the fulfilment of our Lord's Christhood in redemptive power. Indeed, the more spiritual the apprehension of the person of Christ and the more glorious the revelation of His Resurrection and Ascension, the more indispensable becomes a presentation of our Lord's death which is in keeping alike with the majesty of His Person and the glory of His kingdom. It would of all things be most inconceivable that Christ should have 'died to none effect.' It is not too much to say that both the Incarnation and the Resurrection find their full significance only in their connexion with our Lord's death. In it the Incarnation reaches its climax; the Resurrection finds its starting-point, not only physically but in the complete expression of that spiritual life of which the Resurrection is the fitting climax and consummation. It becomes clear, therefore, that a sacrificial significance must be attached to the death of Christ.

The course of the Epistle inevitably suggests the form in which that sacrificial significance must present itself to the Apostle. He deals in chap. ii. with the catholic fellowship of the Church as resting upon restored and fulfilled fellowship with God. In the case of Gentile converts this is in total contrast with their previous condition. 'Wherefore remember,' he says, 'that aforetime ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of

Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world' (ii. 11, 12). This description suggests, by contrast, the meaning of their new relationship. Circumcision was the sign and seal of a covenant relationship to God. Those who received it were united in the commonwealth of Israel, set apart to enjoy the fellowship and promises of God. The Christian Church stands for a yet higher realization of such fellowship; the entrance into and enjoyment of a covenant in which Jew and Gentile have an equal share. But the ancient covenant was based on and cemented by sacrifice. At every stage and in every connexion this fact is brought home to us. The redemption from Egypt was inseparably conjoined with the Paschal sacrifice. The solemn inauguration of the covenant in the wilderness was attended by sacrifices. Throughout succeeding ages the national infractions of the covenant were atoned for year by year through the sin-offering of the great Day of Atonement. The maintenance of the covenant was signalized by sacrifice—the perpetual repetition of the peace-offerings. Hence when St. Paul treats of consummated fellowship with God, of a spiritual commonwealth in covenant with Him, of the impartation of a divine life proceeding from Him, it is inevitable that the sacrificial aspects of the Old Testament covenant should be before his mind. He reveals this clearly in writing to the Corinthians when he says, 'For our Passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ' (1 Cor. v. 7).

So far as to the general conditions and associations of St. Paul's doctrine of redemption through the Cross, 'In the blood of Christ.' Christ, with all that He is, does, and suffers, is the gift to man of the fatherly sovereignty of God and in fulfilment of His eternal purpose. The death of Christ can be to no purpose unless it is the very centre of the redemptive deeds which make up the complete Fact of Christ. The relation in which His death stands to the gift of redemption and to the new life of fellowship with God is prefigured by the sacrifice with which the ancient covenant of God with Israel was cemented and sealed. These may be laid down as the presuppositions upon which St. Paul's doctrine of the Atonement rests, the moulding influences by which it is shaped. Taken together, they clearly indicate that for St. Paul 'the blood of Christ' represented the propitiatory character of His death, was the means of incorporation in the new community of the redeemed, and constituted the new life-principle by which all its members were imbued.

From these suggestions, however, an advance must be made to the distinctive features which convert what would otherwise be a mere suggestion from the sacrifices of the past into a supreme and final revelation of grace and spiritual glory. The death of Christ is for St. Paul the crowning deed of His divine personality, the final consummation of His filial obedience. 'He became obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross,' says the Apostle in the Epistle to the Philippians (ii. 8).

The whole history of redemption is that of the self-oblation of the Son of God. The eternal purpose of God in Him is fulfilled by His own free act. It is not imposed upon Him from without. The earthly conditions which brought it about were dominated and transformed by His personal consecration. His act may be interpreted in terms of ancient sacrifices, but only in so far as these have been charged with a spiritual significance that receives transcendent and final expression in Christ.

How, then, is this great sacrifice to be interpreted in itself and in its relations both to God and man? In itself it is, as the Epistle to the Hebrews describes it, a 'resisting unto blood, striving against sin' (Heb. xii. 4). But St. Paul says something even more striking in the Epistle to the Colossians, which sheds so much light on this Epistle. In His Cross, the Apostle declares that He 'put off from Himself the principalities and the powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it' (Col. ii. 15). It was as though in the darkness of His Passion the powers of evil beset Him so closely as to wrap Him round like a garment. Every motive which ungodliness and self-seeking can possibly suggest embodied themselves in principle in the temptations that were presented by the conditions that led up to His crucifixion. But our Lord, by the victorious exercise of His free personality in loyalty to His Father and in the perfect fruition of righteousness, stripped the deadly garment from off Himself. His death was in reality His spiritual victory, the expression of

His divine and holy life. This triumph was gained by one decisive act, which, while in one aspect an act of utter self-renunciation, was in another an act of most glorious self-affirmation against the forces, diabolic as well as earthly, that would have robbed Him of His spiritual integrity, of His life in and for the Father.

In other words, the Cross of Christ was His supreme affirmation of righteousness, His repudiation of sin. He accomplished it in the fullness of His divine Sonship, acting in and through His complete and sinless manhood. Thus, to use the expression of the Epistle to the Romans, the death of Christ is 'for the showing of God's righteousness' (Rom. iii. 26). This great demonstration is made by a revealing act wrought by the Son of God before mankind, and by a human confession offered by the man Christ Jesus to God. These two aspects are one and indivisible.

The effect of this act must be understood in the light of our Lord's relationship to mankind. It is noteworthy that each time St. Paul refers to the subject in this Epistle he prefaces his reference to the blood of Christ by a general statement as to the indwelling of believers in Christ, 'in whom' he says, 'we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses' (i. 7). 'But now *in Christ Jesus* ye that were once far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ' (ii. 13). The atoning significance of the Cross of Christ depends not only upon the efficacy of His act in itself, but upon His holding such a relationship to the human

race as enables Him to offer it as the eternal representative of mankind. Furthermore, this relationship is not abstract, but is capable of such realization in the Church and in each member of it that every believer, by the act and attitude of his faith, comes to abide in the atoning act of Christ and associates himself with it.

From this it is clear how and why the divine forgiveness, fatherly and gracious as it is, can only be in and through the blood of Christ. It can only take effect by the reassertion of righteousness on God's part and the acceptance of righteousness on man's. Christ and His blood, rightly understood, are the realm in which alone the writ of fatherly mercy runs. This fact enhances instead of limiting both the gracious Fatherhood and the supreme sovereignty of God. The conviction of sin lies at the heart both of the experience and the doctrine of forgiveness; and directly the fact of sin is admitted and its meaning is apprehended, forgiveness can only be vouchsafed in the blood of Christ—that is to say, in the sphere and under the conditions of reasserted and reaccepted righteousness.

Yet though redemption is 'in the blood of Christ,' it is not in the act itself or in its consequences apart from the actor. Nor is it in Him as dying on our behalf, apart from the subsequent fulfilment of His life-history in His resurrection, exaltation, and return in the Holy Spirit. His death is made spiritually effectual in and through all these.

The stress is laid by the Apostle throughout upon the personality of our Lord. Indeed, this Epistle may fitly be treated as the Epistle of triumphant personality. The personality of our Lord is so transcendently great that in it the personality of God is set forth and the personality of man comes by its own. The opening words of the Epistle, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ' (i. 3), are the preface to a marvellous exposition which shows that the sovereignty of God is secure and the transformation of the universe is assured, not by the necessity of universal laws, however divine, but by the supreme personality of our Lord. His very name, 'our Lord Jesus Christ,' marks the greatest achievement that personality ever accomplished. St. Paul is most careful in the precise use of the names of Christ. The Jesus of earthly history, of unprivileged human nature—familiar, despised, and rejected—wins for Himself the name of Christ while contradicting and destroying all the preconceptions with which Christhood had been invested. Not only so, but the Christhood for which He won recognition became far more wonderful than the highest anticipation of Old Testament prophecy. It superseded what had become an antiquated and impracticable dream by a supreme spiritual, universal, and permanent ideal. Nor was this all. The Jesus who thus claimed, fulfilled, and received Christhood is 'our Lord.' In His great self-revelation He manifested a divinity which converted loyalty into

worship and established His dominion for ever where only God has a right to reign. And still more. This personality is so supreme in its spiritual perfection that henceforth the conception and definition of God is fixed by our Lord. None other name can henceforth be given to God save that of 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Again, this personality is central. Christ becomes the sphere and the agent in and through whom the eternal purpose of God is wrought out. It is in keeping with all this that our Lord's death becomes in its turn the supreme expression of His personality. It is not something inflicted upon Him from which He suffers, so much as something undertaken by Him which He discharges in prevailing deed. Nor does this complete the history. Through death He passes to a position and influence which make His personality infinitely more effectual throughout the ages than it was in the days of His flesh. Thus the great description given in this Epistle of His headship over the Church and of the influence of His Spirit records not a speculation, but the outstanding fact of Christian experience, reproduced in and verified by countless believers throughout all succeeding generations. Hence the redemption that is in His blood becomes fully effectual on behalf of men as they enter into and abide in Him. Christ, the Redeemer, is the living head, the life and directive energy of His body, the Church, and of every individual member of it. Further, He represents the type to which they

become conformed and conveys the spiritual energy by which they attain to this transformation. Hence the redemption in His blood is followed by the quickening and uplifting in which redemption issues and in which also the members of Christ come to share the life and to reproduce the life-history of their Lord. And this not merely at the decisive moment when they receive a resurrection or new creation through Him, but all along. The sustaining energy of the new life comes from unbroken spiritual relations with Christ. Yet it is not said that Christ the Redeemer quickens men. The 'exceeding greatness of the power' is said to be that of the Father (i. 19), who 'quickened us together with Christ' (ii. 5). It may seem that this statement presents a dilemma. How can men be quickened by the Father unless they are already in Christ, and how can they be in Christ unless they have already been quickened by the Father? This Epistle does not supply the answer to this problem, but it is given in the Epistle to the Colossians in the great saying to which we have so often referred. Our Lord's headship of the Church is based upon the antecedent relationship resulting from the fact that 'in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist' (Col. i. 16, 17). Our Lord's original relationship to humanity, though unfulfilled and in a measure destroyed by

sin, remains the root-fact of human nature. It supplies the spiritual basis upon which the grace of the Father and the work of Christ become effectual in the Church and in each of its members. Hence the quickening power of God finds its entrance into the hearts of men in and through this original relationship to Christ. The manifestation of the quickening grace of God is not at any moment independent of man's relationship to Christ. Men are not quickened and then incorporated in Christ. Nor are they incorporated in Christ and then quickened. The two proceed side by side. The quickening energy of God is exerted from first to last in the sphere of Christ, and as it advances to its culmination incorporation in Christ becomes completely fulfilled. This inward quickening in Christ is the first step of a progressive manifestation of the power of Christ's Resurrection, which knows no limitation till men are fully redeemed from all bondage to sin and death, being perfected in the eternal life of God. In this final consummation the work of redemption finds its eternal fulfilment.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRANSCENDENT LIFE OF THE SPIRIT AND ITS UNBOUNDED POSSIBILITIES

The sphere of the Blessed Life is 'in Christ.' The experience through which man enters into it is that of 'redemption through His blood.' The nature and the infinite promise of this life is the outstanding subject of the Epistle to the Ephesians. It opens with this theme, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ: even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved' (i. 3–6). This great declaration strikes the keynote of all that follows. The characteristic action 'of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' is that He 'hath blessed us.' The generosity of His bounty and its ample satisfaction of every need are shown in the added phrase 'with every spiritual blessing.' The sphere in

which men receive and enjoy this blessedness is transcendent and spiritual. It is transcendent, for it is said to be 'in the heavenly places' (see also chap. ii. 6). It is spiritual, for it is 'in love.' It represents not a mere exaltation and enlargement of spirit, such as ordinary religious enthusiasm can produce, for those who enjoy it fulfil the purpose of the divine predestination, 'that they should be holy and without blemish before Him in love.' The gift of sanctification has its issue in an ethical purity which enables men to stand in the presence of all-holy perfection. The relationship in which all these conditions are fulfilled is that of sonship, for men receive 'adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself,' that is 'unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Later on there is a suggestion that this relationship of sonship implies something deeper and more intimate than its merely human foreshadowing. Christians are said to be 'builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit' (ii. 22), just as the Church has been previously described as 'the Body of Christ, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all' (i. 23). Both these statements are made in respect of the Church as a whole. But what is true of the Church as a whole must be in accordance with, or rather must prescribe, the position of every individual member of it. There is an ineffable mysticism in the relationship of sonship which involves incorporation in Christ and being indwelt, inhabited, by God. Hence there must be added to all the other determinations the new one that the

transcendent life of sonship is not only in Christ, but in the Spirit; though, properly understood, these two, if not altogether identical, are absolutely inseparable, and each is explicable only in terms of the other.

Hence the starting-point for any satisfactory understanding of the Apostle's teaching must be with the characteristic relationship, that of sonship. In the next place, the transcendence and the boundless possibilities of the life of sonship must be considered. And, finally, the nature of life 'in the Spirit' which is the condition under which all this is enjoyed, must be examined.

To begin with, then, sonship is the relationship to God that governs the Christian life. It goes almost without saying that this implies a distinctive personal relationship and that this distinctive personal relationship combines utter dependence, the obligation to complete self-surrender and obedience, and the enjoyment through these of the most intimate fellowship of love. It means, further, that the nature of the blessedness and the way in which it is bestowed emphasize, instead of suppress, personality The Apostle has many figures by means of which he represents the relationship of believers to God. Some of them, if taken by themselves, might lead along a mystic way in which the distinction of personality between God and man is transcended and thereby the personality of both is destroyed. But the Apostle rules out all such mysticism as absolutely impossible. The relationship in which God communicates Himself to man is

that of Fatherhood, and that in which man aspires after and enjoys God is that of sonship. This means that the experience of grace lays stress upon personality and emphasizes the distinction between God and man in transcending it. This is also implied by the description of the new life in Christ as being 'in love.' For love is destroyed by any such absolute identification as suppresses personal distinctions and the fellowship in which such distinctions are at once respected and overcome. It is in keeping with these essential conditions that at a later stage the Apostle prays 'that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man' (iii. 16). The inmost personality needs not only to be uplifted and transformed, but also to be strengthened: 'to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, *may be strong* to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God' (iii. 17–19). All that is deepest and intensest in mystic fervour breathes in this prayer. Yet personality is not lost, but found, in and for God. The condition of rising to these heights and sinking to these depths consists not in the destruction, but in the confirmation, of the selfhood which is indispensable to any truly spiritual communion with God. Upon this basis all that is helpful in a true mysticism can be maintained and satisfied while all extravagance is corrected and expelled.

This relationship of sonship must needs be the

characteristic relationship of the Christian life. The realm in which this life is received and fulfilled is 'in Christ.' And Christ is the Son of God. Hence Christ's sonship is the type and the organizing principle by which our relationship to God is governed and fashioned. Any other relationship would be incompatible with being 'in Christ.' The word 'in' would in that case mean an inapplicable suggestion of spatial relations, not of spiritual indwelling. Whatever else the being 'in Christ' may include, it must mean conformity with Him. In a very real sense Christians are of His body, the subordinate yet living instruments of His purposes, the expression and fulfilment of His life. This, however, is only one aspect of the case, for the purpose of Christ is not to suppress, but to call out and perfect human personality in Himself. This being so, it can only be by imparting to and fostering in men a relationship to God which is founded upon and accordant with His own. Hence, as St. Paul elsewhere says, our Lord's end is to become 'the firstborn among many *brethren*' (Rom. viii. 29).

Further, spiritual and ethical values are predominant in this relationship of sonship. The keyword for St. Paul is 'adoption.' In the passage which is now under consideration the reference to 'the adoption of sons' proceeds naturally from the previous declaration of the divine purpose 'that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love.' The term 'adoption' alone answers to the governing facts of the situation. To begin with, man's sonship is of free grace and not of necessity.

Moreover, the experience both of St. Paul and his readers was that this new relationship had supervened upon an old one by a critical, though a spiritual, transformation. 'The spirit of bondage unto fear,' as the Apostle puts it to the Romans (Rom. viii. 15), had been replaced by 'the Spirit of adoption.' The very process through which this change had been brought about emphasized the original unworthiness of those who received this unspeakable gift. It came to them by way of redemption, 'the forgiveness of their trespasses.' All this is taken up into and expressed by the term 'adoption.'

But equally the word suggests that this deed of grace was a considered act founded upon righteous principles and valid against all possible contingencies. Adoption, as is well known, was frequent in the ancient world, was carefully guarded both by law and procedure, and conferred the full status and security of blood relationship. As St. Paul uses the term, he intends it to convey in full measure these suggestions with all their consequences. If in a real sense the sonship enjoyed by Christians is not innate, it does not thereby rest upon a less stable foundation. It is founded in the deliberate act of God in fulfilment of His eternal purpose in Christ. It is governed by His righteousness and gives effect to it. It is brought about by the ordered work of salvation. All this is sufficiently familiar to the students of St. Paul's writings. Yet this is not all. As this adoption proceeds from the holy and righteous, as well as the gracious, act

of God, so it issues in righteousness and true holiness. Righteousness is imputed to men in Christ to begin with and is imparted to them in consequence. The imputation of righteousness, or justification, is not mentioned in this Epistle, as has been pointed out, though the reference to 'the forgiveness of our trespasses' in this context comes very near to it. But the spiritual and moral consequences occupy the foreground of this Epistle. Adoption and the appropriation to God of which the sealing by the Spirit is the sign are inseparably connected, and the holiness of God implies that such appropriation can only take place as it is accompanied by, not only a life-giving, but a sanctifying process. Christians are to be 'holy and without blemish before Him.' Such words in themselves had ceremonial significance both for Jewish and Gentile readers. The attempt to moralize them elsewhere, either in Jewish religion or in Greek mysticism, had at the best been only imperfectly successful. Here, however, it is completely effected. The added words, 'in love,' show this when we bear in mind what St. Paul's teaching in regard to love is, both in this Epistle and elsewhere. The very fact, then, that God, being what He is, confers upon men 'the adoption of sons unto Himself,' carries with it the consequence that by so doing He bestows upon them the power which conforms them to His own likeness and makes their sonship a suitable response to and manifestation of His holy perfection.

Thus through the experience and doctrine of adoption a reinterpretation is given not only to

the sonship of man, but even to the Fatherhood of God. To the sonship of man, in the first place, as conferred by a supernatural act of grace and as resulting in spiritual and moral likeness to God. But thereby new light is thrown upon the inmost essence of God's Fatherhood. It stands not for His creative activity, for His unfailing beneficence, or even for His inherent sovereignty. Above all, it stands for the holy energy of love which knows no satisfaction in anything lower than the reproduction of itself. The Fatherhood of God has, therefore, a twofold revelation. First of all, in His Fatherhood towards our Lord Jesus Christ, whose sinlessness and positive perfection are a manifestation of His Father. In the next place, in the adoption of sons as righteously conferred in Christ, as carefully guarded, and as powerfully accompanied by the quickening and sanctifying energy of the Holy Spirit. Again, the distinction of the Apostle's doctrine from the unworthier kinds of mysticism must be carefully noted. Just as mysticism has too often ignored and tended to destroy personality, so also it has frequently sought to transcend morality. It has done so on the lower plane by disparaging and even setting aside the ordinary relationships which can only be fulfilled by a morally ordered life. But it has also done so on a higher level, either by thinking away those moral qualities of God which make fellowship with Him inseparable from moral qualities in man, or by stimulating spiritual emotions which are almost entirely devoid of moral inspiration and restraint.

It may be held by some that these supreme advantages are lessened, if not altogether destroyed, by the artificiality of the term 'adoption' and by its supposed negation of an original sonship apart from and before God's act of redemptive grace. The term may seem to imply a restriction of God's generosity and a narrowing of the conception of His Fatherhood. It may also be held to suggest either a superaddition of filial qualities to those who had not hitherto possessed them, or such a total corruption of human nature in men previous to their adoption as would involve a breach of personal identity when they enter upon the new relationship to God. Such a doctrine of God would be spiritually inconceivable. Such a doctrine of man would be psychologically inexplicable. St. Paul's teaching, however, is not open to any of these objections. To begin with, the very frequency with which adoption was practised in his time made it seem much more natural and much less artificial than it appears to us. In the next place, the act of adoption involves in fullest measure the highest instincts and affections of Fatherhood. The display of these higher qualities is enhanced and not lessened by so deliberate an act, which has as its single motive the will to bring men into the full and abiding fellowship of His holy love. But, further, St. Paul's doctrine shows that God's gracious adoption of sons is the consummation of a universal love which embraces all men. The special gift to believers is so prepared for and grounded in His creatorship that its fulfilment in them, so far from prejudicing others,

sheds the light of promise upon them. And, once more, only those who have the capacity of sonship can be adopted as sons. As has already been remarked, sombre as is St. Paul's doctrine in regard to sinful man, it does not go to the point of destroying that capacity for redemption which persists in spite of sin and which gives a point of contact to the operations of the Holy Spirit of Christ.

Hence the teaching of the Epistle reveals a complete congruity between the character of God, His eternal purpose in Christ, the status of sonship to which He foreordains believers, the universal capacity of mankind to enter into the life of sonship, and the quickening power of the Holy Spirit which prepares the filial response in their hearts. The whole process springs out of God's essential Fatherhood, is carried out by a creative providence which, sin apart, prepares the way of the final fulfilment and is consummated by the work of grace. Grace rests upon the creative foundation, repairs its breach by redemption, and fulfils its promise in quickening and sanctification. From time to time there are new and decisive beginnings in the activity of grace. New emergencies are created by human sin and frailty. The grant of freedom to man involves these risks. It predicates freedom in God, not only as the pre-condition of freedom in man, but in meeting the emergencies that arise out of man's freedom. But while there are new beginnings and great emergencies, there are no inconsistencies or gaps in the fulfilment of the divine purpose. Its ordered and triumphant fulfilment is the expression

of infinite and holy Fatherhood, reproducing itself in a worthy sonship. This fulfilment is the goal of a process which is fatherly throughout, and most fatherly in the reconciling and redemptive measures that are taken to meet the supreme emergency of sin and all that results from it.

The content of the sonship which is realized in Christ is easily ascertained both from the nature of the relationship itself and also from the descriptions that are given in the Epistle. The relationship in itself signifies a vital bond in which dependence, obligation, and fellowship are harmoniously combined and worthily expressed in the sure confidence of faith and the loyalty of love. In this relationship the filial nature of the believer is pervaded by the gracious presence and love of the Father. The life of the believer, rooted and confirmed in personality, parts with all isolating and restricting limitations and becomes so enlarged as to receive in an endless progress the fullness of the divine. Man's true being is realized in and for God. Yet the transference of the centre of his life, with all its interests and concerns, to God is not by constraint or in violation of freedom, but springs from the self-devotion of love, in which freedom is perfected and life with all its possibilities is satisfied. Further, in and through this filial relationship the plenitude of the divine resources is made fully and at once available for believers. For sonship involves the consummation of dependence and obligation in joyous fellowship with God. It carries with it, not only complete self-surrender to God's holy will on

man's side, but on God's part the complete bestowment of the means of making this surrender joyfully. Hence the Epistle is pervaded by the full assurance of infinite resources at command, and of these resources as both unfailingly and ungrudgingly conveyed wherever the life of sonship in all its conditions is fulfilled. The memory of the past, the experience of the present, the confident anticipation of the future, all combine to strengthen this great and triumphant assurance. Hence, while the sense of redemption, mercifully bestowed and thankfully received with unspeakable wonder, fills the foreground of the Epistle, its background, or rather its pervading atmosphere, is that of boundless satisfaction. In the relationship of sonship man finds his true place in the divine order, that is in the Father's house; finds also abundant room to live and to put forth all the characteristic activities of his being. He is not strange to the new environment, but finds himself at home in it. Through penitence and faith he rises to his new position. Sonship, citizenship, inheritance, with all the suggestions they convey and all the associations in which they are found, are the chosen terms which give expression to this complete and boundless satisfaction. Nor is there any dread of God or shrinking from that mutual interpenetration of spiritual life which, while it respects and perpetuates personal distinctions, yet transcends them in the fellowship of holy love. God in all the glory of His holy and sovereign Fatherhood has become the dwelling-place of His sons; in like manner they also 'are

builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit' (ii. 22).

This at-homeness with God is accompanied by a sense of harmony with and of sovereignty over the whole of things. This is conveyed by the use of the word 'inheritance,' and by the spirit of serene confidence in which the universe is surveyed and the issues of the present and of the future of life and death are contemplated. There are no dark corners in which fear continues to hold sway. There are no lawless provinces of life which can successfully defy the universal sovereignty of love. All things are brought into harmonious working for the believer, and according to his sure trust they are being brought into line with the redemptive sovereignty of Christ. Hence the serene calm of a sunlit Sabbath irradiates the whole.

Yet this is not all. Complete satisfaction is combined with infinite promise and unquenchable aspiration. This combination is essential to sonship in its ideal significance. Those who enter into this relationship are sure of their position and enjoy its satisfactions. Yet the experience of sonship is of necessity progressive. It unfolds its possibilities both of demand and supply as spiritual development proceeds. This is suggested even in human sonship, though the rapidity with which maturity is reached and decay sets in prevents the human relationship from being more than a suggestion of the divine. Yet the possibilities even of human sonship are bounded only by the limitations imposed upon fatherhood by the earthly conditions that govern

human nature in its natural relations. The relationship of Fatherhood and sonship, however, in the divine life can only be limited on the one hand by the divine Fatherhood, and on the other by the spiritual capacity of His sons. So far as the divine Fatherhood is concerned, no limitations are possible. And the glory of the sonship which God conveys to believers in Christ lies just in the sense that all restrictions upon human capacity are being removed. The quickening, uplifting, and enlarging influence of the Holy Spirit makes the human spirit equal to receiving and reciprocating endlessly the communication of the divine.

Hence, the basis being firmly secured through 'the adoption of sons,' the prospect of infinite and eternal satisfaction is at once opened up. What is most important to note is the divine naturalness of what is wholly supernatural. Magnificent as is the destiny set before men in the Epistle, the reader is made to feel that where the spiritual conditions are satisfied its realization and enjoyment are inevitable. The whole process advances under mighty spiritual influences towards its goal. The inspiration and power which give effect to redemption are transcendent in their nature and operation. Yet never for a moment does their working appear abnormal or at variance with the development and perfecting of a true humanity. Although the humanity of believers is treated throughout as raised to a higher power in Christ, it is humanity still. Indeed, it is the only humanity that attains to the ideal by which humanity itself can be explained.

Thus, while all is supernatural, nothing is miraculous, still less magical.

At no point are the Apostle's readers drawn away from the real facts of spiritual life into any mere wonderland of exalted fancy. The beginnings of the divine process are made real and are authenticated in a transforming spiritual experience. That spiritual experience contains within itself the promise and power of an ever-progressive realization. He who is conscious of the life-giving beginning is led forward by the sure anticipation of a living hope towards the goal of being, ' filled unto all the fullness of God ' (iii. 19), and of attaining in the fellowship of the whole body ' unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ ' (iv. 13).

The sure confidence that the fulfilment of these unlimited possibilities in the case of believers is both natural and inevitable rests upon a fourfold foundation.

(1) Primarily upon the Fatherhood of God ; upon the eternal purpose of His love to convey the unsearchable riches of His perfection and blessedness to those whom He adopts as sons. Everything depends upon the idea of God and of His Fatherhood, yet the idea is neither abstract nor imaginary. Both the nature and the Fatherhood of God have been set forth in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is as ' the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ' that He stands revealed. It is in the history of our Lord that the full resources of His Fatherhood have been displayed.

At the same time the experience of Christ has brought to men a quickening, an illumination, and a fellowship which have given them an experimental knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. This experience conveys the assurance that all that God is to Christ He will become to those who are ' in Christ.' Thus the idea of God and of His Fatherhood is experimental and living. Believers are led to their conception of what He is through what He does and what He becomes to them. The Fatherhood which stands revealed in Christ reproduces all that is most characteristic of itself in and towards those who are ' in Christ.' Its resources are as available for such, and as inexhaustible, as they have been shown to be in the perfect fellowship between the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

(2) The next element in this full assurance consists in the unfolding within the heart of a filial capacity which shows itself in ever-growing aspiration. Contact with ' the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ' has called into activity great energies of spiritual feeling which had never made their existence manifest before or had betrayed it only in the unrest and inner discord of unsatisfied desires. By the touch of God these unsuspected powers have been called out. They have taken possession of the quickened personality and have become characteristic of it. As they have done so, they have brought the sense of a growing self-realization to which no bounds can be set. Aspiration has grown with satisfaction. It goes from grace to grace, from faith to faith, and from glory to

glory. The irresistible inference is that God has planted an infinite receptivity in the heart of man to correspond with His eternal purpose to impart His own infinite perfection as the gift of His fatherly love. Thus the idea of God contains within itself and furnishes the idea of man. This idea, too, like that of God, is not abstract, but is shaped by the vital forces of spiritual progress, corresponding to and filling the divine mould of the filial relationship received through the adoption of sons.

(3) The third element is that of the quickening, enlarging, and uplifting influence of the Spirit of Christ. This element must receive fuller consideration later on. It is sufficient for the present to note that for the Apostle it is connected with the personality of Christ and is specially made manifest in His Resurrection. The divine power which wrought in Christ when God raised Him from the dead works in men through the Spirit. And in them it has wrought a transformation worthy of comparison with the Resurrection of our Lord. God has ' quickened us together with Christ ' (ii. 5). The very word ' quickened ' conveys the impression of an altogether transcendent and divine power, which yet is not alien from those in whom it works. It works with a benignity and inwardness which restore to men what is their own, though without such grace it had been irrevocably lost.

(4) The final element of confidence lies in the ultimate friendliness of the universe itself as it has been so created through Christ and unto Him (Col. i. 15, 16), that all things can be summed up in Him

(Eph. i. 10). The universe is itself subject to the eternal purpose of God, its Creator and our Father, and amenable to the spiritual and redemptive sovereignty of Christ.

Yet of all these four elements the foremost is that of the Fatherhood of God, for in it all the rest are implied, and by it all the rest are actually laid down and fulfilled. No such Fatherhood as the Apostle contemplates could possibly exist without fixing the inherent possibilities of human nature, without supplying the redemptive means for its renovation and satisfaction, and without securing for its complete and eternal realization the co-operation of all that is. Hence the working out of 'the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will' is 'to the end that we should be unto the praise of His glory' (i. 11, 12). The divine Fatherhood is displayed to and in and through those who receive the adoption of His sons. Of His free grace they are made essential to the full manifestation of His eternal glory. The revelation of His Fatherhood in all its meaning and in the wealth of its resources is contained in His dealing with them in Christ. The end of His grace lies beyond them. It is in Himself and in His infinite perfection. Yet it is of the essence of Fatherhood that, since it gains its end *in sons*, its triumph means not the subordination of mere instruments, but the complete attainment of freedom, fellowship, and blessedness in the fulfilment of the fatherly end. As sons, men come into their own inheritance by becoming a heritage of God (i. 11).

Hence life has become spiritual in its definition and eternal in its nature. It has been raised and adjusted to the highest order of things, and has organized itself on this new and higher basis. A man's world is to be found where his personality is called out into its fullest and most characteristic activity. Personal activity calls out and unifies thought, feeling, and will. It directs them to common ends. But the end pursued becomes in a very true sense the environment in which the personality lives. This is the case for several reasons. To begin with, the realization of the desired end is anticipated in imaginative fruition. Further, those elements of the world and experience which stand in vital relations to the supreme end are selected by the personality. It naturally associates itself with them and emphasizes them, ignoring other elements which are either incompatible with or useless to the end that is sought. For one man the world consists in political interests and relations ; for another it is the sphere of commercial and industrial enterprise. Yet another makes it the subject of scientific investigation ; while another makes it yield the artistic pursuit of the Beautiful. All such pursuits stand high above the natural life of the sense-bound man. That a man should be able to select such objects and by means of them to create such an environment for himself shows that an advanced stage of human development has been reached. While the pursuit of such ends involves a selection of kindred elements and suitable means from the infinite material of the world, each higher ideal manifests its superiority,

in part, by its power to create a comprehensive whole of life in which manifold lower elements are subordinated to and quickened by the dominant aim.

Now, the Epistle to the Ephesians presents the supreme instance of this power of selection, subordination, and comprehension. Indeed, this instance is so supreme as to cast all other examples into the shade. The Apostle says that God 'quickened us together with Christ . . . and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus' (ii. 5, 6). This description must be read in the light of what has been said about 'the adoption of sons.' It shows the working of a power which completely adjusts the nature of believers to the new and dominant relationships. As our Father is in heaven and as Christ 'sits with Him in the heavenly places,' so believers habitually dwell with God and share the triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ. This fact has two aspects. In the first place, it means that the inmost personality, the whole being, of the believer is called out in the filial fellowship which responds to and enjoys the grace of God. And, in the second place, it implies that life is henceforth organized and directed from this central point. The whole realm of relationships, interests, and pursuits, which are unified, moulded, and inspired by God in Christ Jesus, becomes the sphere in which the personality of the believer comes to complete self-realization. From this vantage-ground the quickened and exalted personality makes selection from the world of all that is in keeping

with the supreme relationships and with the ruling interests of this divine and heavenly life. A principle of discernment and discrimination is at work. Other elements are seized upon and subordinated to that which is highest and central. And by their subordination they are not merely transformed but vivified. The quality of the divine and heavenly life is imparted to them according to the measure of their worth. And the supremacy of this life in Christ Jesus is shown alike in the height of its aspiration, the depth of its experience, and the comprehension by which it annexes to itself everything which belongs to the proper fulfilment of human life and to the perfecting of human personality.

The characteristic privilege of the heavenly life which believers enjoy is that of personal fellowship. It consists not in an abstract pursuit, whether of truth, beauty, or goodness; not even in the pursuit of holiness, though holiness is the highest condition of the spiritual life in which alone can truth, beauty, and goodness be apprehended in their true nature and real significance. Those who are adopted as sons of God seek and enjoy fellowship *with Him*, the eternal source and substance of all truth, beauty, goodness, and, pre-eminently, of holiness. And this ruling characteristic of personal fellowship governs all else. The sons of God are 'fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God' (ii. 19). In the same way St. John, having said that 'our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ' (1 John i. 1–3), goes on to speak of 'our fellowship one with another' (i. 7). In short, per-

sonality can only be realized in personal relations; the personal relations which love creates, maintains, and crowns. In such relations every power and capacity of human nature is called forth and satisfied in unselfish fellowship and loving service.

Just because the life of sonship is that of personal fellowship, it is pre-eminently the life of spiritual fulfilment. And this fulfilment has no term. It contains within itself infinite promise and demands for itself an eternal sphere. The subject of this heavenly fellowship becomes conscious that there is no obstacle to the fulfilment of its promise, and that he has already passed into the eternal sphere in which it is and will be made good. The darkness of death is left behind. The clutches of the material world have been relaxed. The spirit has already made its dwelling-place with God, and has the world of time and sense beneath its feet.

Thus the adoption of sons and the quickening which accompanies it introduce men to a new and heavenly order of life. Yet just as they can only appropriate the gifts of the earthly order when all the faculties of their being are awakened and adjusted to it, so they can only apprehend and appropriate the possibilities of the heavenly order by a similar activity and adjustment. In the case of so transcendent an inheritance this involves an immeasurable exaltation. Man's being must be raised to a higher power and every spiritual possibility brought to a complete and constant realization. 'The unsearchable riches of Christ' are offered to him; but they only become effectively his in so far as he lays hold of

them and puts them to full account. Because of this the Apostle's practical solicitude for his readers is unceasingly directed to this need. But he must of necessity seek its supply from God. Hence the two great prayers of the Epistle, the first contained in chap. i. 15–23; the second in chap. iii. 14–21. In the former of these two passages the Apostle seeks from 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,' the gift of the 'spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.' Those who receive this spirit will have 'the eyes of their heart enlightened.' This enlightenment will convey to them a threefold knowledge, namely, 'what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe.' In these three is contained the complete manifestation of the fatherly sovereignty of God. Hence they are conveyed 'in the knowledge of Him,' that is to say, of 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.' Men can only know Him as they come to realize these three elements of His gift to them in Christ. And, on the other hand, all three can only be experienced as vital parts of 'the knowledge of Him'—knowledge which consists in living fellowship with Him in Christ.

The second passage goes yet deeper. The Apostle prays 'that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man.' If the secret of God is to be disclosed to his readers, this can only be, not by the suppression, but by the divine empowerment, of their personality. This empower-

ment effects two results. It invigorates their *faith* and stimulates its activity, while it roots and grounds them *in love*—that is, calls them out of their selfish isolation and enables them fully to respond to the divine relationships which have been opened up to them. This strengthening comes 'through His Spirit,' the Spirit of 'the Father from whom every Fatherhood in heaven and earth is named.' It brings about the indwelling of Christ 'in your hearts through faith,' and it makes men 'strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God.'

All this must be dealt with in greater detail. The former of the two prayers is directed to 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory,' and the governing petition is that 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him' may be given to the Apostle's readers. Only a special divine illumination can enable them to apprehend and experience the greatness and glory of the prospect that is held out to them. First of all, the sphere in which this illuminating Spirit works is said to be 'in the knowledge of Him,' that is to say, of 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory.' The prospects of believers depend upon and are guaranteed by God. The whole of the prayer centres in Him, calling attention to *His* calling, to *His* inheritance in the saints, and to the exceeding greatness of *His* power to us-ward who believe. The Apostle is not guided by a natural history of

humanity, a psychology of saintship, or a spiritual philosophy of the universe in itself. All these on closer scrutiny will be found congruous with the character and purpose of God as these are made manifest. But it is upon the character and purpose of God as He becomes surely known to believers that all their prospects depend. That may surely be believed which is contained in, or follows as a necessary inference from, the character of God as it is revealed in and through Christ.

In no other respect does the author of this Epistle more clearly show his Hebrew training than in this. In the Old Testament the nature of the divine covenant and service, the whole future of Israel, of mankind collectively and individually, nay, the future of the universe itself, are seen to depend, not only upon the will, but upon the nature of Jehovah. It is His glory that is supreme, and all else is certain just in so far as it is essential to His glory. In the same way here the prospects of believers are grounded in God. Both their discovery and their assurance of these prospects depend upon their knowledge of Him, and upon their knowledge of Him as 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory.' The description is carefully chosen because it necessarily conveys the assurance that is drawn from it. Yet it needed no effort of choice to fix upon this description, for God can no longer be known by any other name than that of 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.' It is as seen in Christ that God is 'the Father of Glory,' manifesting Himself in a splendour which not only belongs to Him, but becomes the

environment and enjoyment of all those upon whom His love is set.

Again, 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory,' comes to be *known as such* by believers. The words 'in the knowledge of Him' imply a real and intimate experience. The knowledge is not merely theoretic. The radiance of the divine glory in Christ streams in upon their hearts. Hence believers do not depend merely upon inference for their assurance that as God was to Christ, so He will be to them. 'The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory,' makes Himself known to them by becoming to them what He was to Christ, by reproducing in and towards them the fatherly attitude and action which He has revealed in all its fullness to and in 'the Son of His love.'

This essential unity between what God is as 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ' and what He is known in experience as being towards Christians depends upon two distinguishable though equivalent conditions. First of all, upon their being 'in Christ'; having such solidarity with Him that their experience of God rests upon and is continuous with His. Secondly, upon their having received 'adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself.' The very form and content of the relationships into which they have entered with Christ and, in Him, with God contain a sure promise from God and a divinely certified demand in men that all the glory which was displayed in Christ will also be made manifest towards them. The characteristic revelation of God and the governing relationship in which He comes to

stand towards men necessitate that they should find in the history of Christ now glorified and exalted 'far above all the heavens' the promise and guarantee of what God's Fatherhood means 'to us-ward who believe.'

Upon this basis St. Paul's description of the illimitable blessedness of those who are in Christ takes the threefold form, 'that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe,' the standard and measure of that power being revealed in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. The three elements thus named, while distinct, are inseparable. The first, 'what is the hope of His calling,' arises out of the eternal purpose which becomes effective for believers as they become conscious of the sovereign summons and invitation to them to enjoy it. This calling in itself holds out these boundless possibilities and offers them to men through the subjective inspiration of hope. It makes hope the natural and dominant feeling which grows out of their response to God. Such hope has a defined object, but its object exists, not outside and apart from the spiritual life, but within it. Hope, informed and inspired by God's calling, rises with an immediate and intuitive response to apprehend and anticipate its sure and glorious fulfilment.

The second expression, 'what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,' is the counterpart of the first. In the former the radiance of the beginning shines all along the way to its

ultimate fulfilment. In the second the magnificent wealth of the end shines back to the starting-point. The boundlessness of the promise is conveyed in the word ' riches,' its splendour in the word ' glory,' its security in the word ' inheritance,' and its spirituality in the final definition ' in the saints.' Moreover, if the former expression emphasized the subjective, this gives prominence to the objective side which corresponds to it. This objective inheritance, thus corresponding to our hope, is God's inheritance in the saints. Its reality and indeed its necessary realization are grounded in God and not in man, not even in the saints. Through the glorification of the saints God comes into His own inheritance in them. God would not be ' the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory,' if He failed to realize to the full ' the riches of the glory of *His inheritance* in the saints.' The majesty of His sovereignty is dependent upon the full and final triumph of His mercy.

The third element is ' the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ,' &c. Both the subjective hope and the objective inheritance are guaranteed to men and fulfilled in them by the divine power. That power has had its consummate display in the glorification of Christ. Yet His glorification is not out of all relation to men ; so distant and exceptional as to have no bearing upon their lives or to be hard of belief. Believers have their own knowledge of ' the exceeding greatness of His power to

us-ward' which works according to the standard that was set in Christ. The glorification of Christ is completed in His body, 'the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.' Through their vital union with Christ believers are conscious of the operation upon them of the self-same power which wrought in Christ when God raised Him from the dead. Thus the closer examination of the prayer shows how at every point it is dominated by the two expressions at the beginning, namely, the description of God as 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,' and the condition laid down that the knowledge of the threefold gift is only to be enjoyed 'in the knowledge *of Him*,' thus revealed in Christ. This effective knowledge of God, as 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory,' is entirely beyond men's natural resources.

The great secret can only be disclosed through the grant of 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation.' The two terms are distinguishable, though they correspond to one another and are completely unified in the one Spirit, which includes and co-ordinates them both. 'Wisdom' implies a definite temper and activity of mind on the believer's part. It involves insight, discrimination, choice, and steadfast pursuit. The wisdom of the wise enables them to appreciate the true values of life; to set its ends in true order and fixity before the mind. In addition, it prompts them to adjust themselves to these ends and to select the best means to their attainment. Wisdom represents, therefore, the power of appreciation and selection of values, the ordering of the

spiritual temper in conformity with them. While it has intellectual and affectional elements, there is also a pronounced volitional quality about it. The word 'revelation' suggests more markedly a gift which men may continuously enjoy, but which they neither create nor control. It is part of earthly wisdom, for instance, to love the sunlight and to seek to walk in it. But the sunlight itself comes as a revelation when the sun emerges from the clouds and sheds its light-giving rays upon men. In the same way the Spirit that is bestowed upon believers operates by way of revelation, presenting to them realities which exist independently of them. Yet these realities, by their vital contact with the spiritual faculties of the sons of God, become part of their conscious experience and inheritance. Then wisdom makes use of the whole content of the revelation.

Apparently St. Paul names 'wisdom' before 'revelation' because the presence of the spiritual faculty, or virtue, must be assumed as the precondition of its enlightenment by revelation. He by no means intends to subordinate revelation as a divine gift to wisdom as a human activity. Yet the conjunction of both is essential. Spiritual revelation can only come to a quickened spiritual faculty. Indeed, revelation can only be apprehended as such in so far as wisdom converts it into a subjective illumination. That faculty is best described by the term 'wisdom,' which brings the inmost personality of the believer into active harmony with the full content of faith and hope and love.

What, however, is most important is that the

divine gift touches in the most vital way the springs of action. Wisdom—especially in the Hebrew use of the word, which St. Paul inherited—is not merely or even mainly intellectual. It is above all spiritual and moral. Its apprehension and evaluation of reality determines the temper and shapes the ordered conduct of life. Similarly, revelation is in the highest sphere what perception is in the lower. Although it affects men apart from conscious effort on their part, it creates their environment, shapes the possibilities and properties of their action, and supplies a constant stimulus to their activity. Their enjoyment of the intellectual and emotional effects of wisdom and revelation is, therefore, conditioned by the practical temper, by the spiritual apprehension and pursuit, the creation of which is the main object of the Spirit.

This inmost, far-reaching, and practical effect is further indicated in the following clause, 'having the eyes of your heart enlightened,' or illuminated. The 'heart' here stands for the inmost personality which manifests itself through the whole range of human powers, intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual. The heart directs and harmonizes all these in so far as it is truly living and alert. The trouble is that 'the eyes of the heart' are so often atrophied and sightless. They do not apprehend the realities in which lie the secrets of holiness and blessedness. Hence the failure of spiritual intent, the aimlessness of life or its bewildered perplexity, the unordered and discordant working of thought, feeling, and will. The heart must have eyes, and

must have eyes illuminated, if holiness is to be sought and true blessedness enjoyed. It is the function of the eyes to be the means of clear and distinct perception, to be the bearers of objective reality to subjective consciousness, and by presenting reality insensibly but powerfully to concentrate our attention and fix our desire upon it. The eyes are the most powerful means alike of kindling desire and of guiding pursuit. Thus the first and outstanding effect of 'a Spirit of wisdom and revelation' is to reach the inmost in us, calling it out into full apprehension and pursuit of the divine reality; thus effecting by means of vivid spiritual perception a complete union between the inmost personality of the believer and the entire universe of God in Christ.

The second prayer (iii. 14–19) has many points of contact with the first. It is pervaded by the same sense of boundless possibilities. It expressly derives this assurance from the same source—the Fatherhood of God. In it the Apostle's intercession is directed upon the same object, the inmost personality of his readers. It magnifies also the exercise of the divine power as essential to the apprehension and enjoyment of the blessedness held out to men in Christ. It has one great distinction in that it emphasizes faith and love, whereas in the former prayer St. Paul singles out hope as the subjective condition of blessedness.

Yet even where the two prayers most closely resemble one another they are mutually complementary. In each case the ground of assurance is

found in the Fatherhood of God. In the former He is addressed as 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory.' The Fatherhood as it is revealed in and towards our Lord Jesus Christ sets the standard alike of His dealings with believers and of their expectation from Him. In the second prayer He is 'the Father from whom every family' founded in fatherhood derives its nature and existence. This variation does not mean that the spiritual meaning of the Divine Fatherhood is to be ascertained from its broken reflection in the human. The Father is still emphatically 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Yet the revelation of His Fatherhood in Christ enables men to discern His universal Fatherhood; indeed necessitates their doing so. Hence the Divine Fatherhood, as it is revealed in Christ, is seen to be supreme and universal in the dealings of God with mankind. Therefore, on this twofold ground—namely, the meaning of the Fatherhood towards Christ and the manifest signs of its constitutive sovereignty over the whole order to which men belong—an unbounded confidence is based. The perfection and expansiveness of the Divine Fatherhood unite to create unlimited expectation. When prayer has breathed its most enlarged petitions, it leads up to the doxology, 'Unto Him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think' (iii. 20). The constitutive relationship which 'the Father' has established with 'every family' of mankind makes the starting-point for His progressive work of redemptive and satisfying love. The infinite

grace of His purposed end has a foregleam in this beneficent beginning. Hence the description by which God is addressed furnishes, not only complete justification for the prayer that is offered, but an ample guarantee of its answer. This is borne out still further by the added words, 'according to the riches of His glory' (iii. 16). The amplitude of the prayer is in keeping with the character and self-revelation of Him to whom it is addressed.

The prayer throughout has an objective reference. It seeks the bestowment of the Spirit as the energy by which the spiritual blessings sought for are to be attained. The concomitant and indeed the equivalent of the energizing of the Spirit is the indwelling of Christ (iii. 17). The extensive result of this is the power 'to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth' (iii. 18). Here the infinitude and comprehensiveness of the inheritance are set forth. Yet its nature is founded in the following words, 'to know the *love of Christ* which passeth knowledge' (iii. 19), and its ultimate goal is 'that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God' (iii. 19). Hence the spiritual inheritance, so unbounded in its scope, consists in the enjoyment of personal relations with God and of God experienced through the power of the Spirit and the indwelling of Christ. Thus the triune manifestation of God is as distinctly marked in this prayer as in the great benediction (2 Cor. xiii. 14). Salvation consists not in subjective spirituality, but in the experience of divine activity. Men are saved and enriched, not

by the perfecting of their spiritual life in itself, but by the complete and characteristic manifestation of God in His redemptive and satisfying power.

Yet for this very reason the subjective conditions are important. If God is to be experienced in the threefold manifestation of His saving grace, the requisite faculties must be present on the human side. For this reason these subjective qualifications are clearly set out. 'Through His Spirit' men are to be 'strengthened with power in the inward man' (iii. 16). The indwelling of Christ is 'through faith' (iii. 17). The condition of apprehending their inheritance and of knowing the love of Christ is that men are 'rooted and grounded in love' (iii. 17). Throughout, the stress is laid upon personality. The exercise of faith and love and their ceaseless concentration upon Christ represent the intensest and most distinctive activity of the highest and inmost personality. If such activity is to be possible, it must be through the empowerment of the inner man. This empowerment through the Spirit is the equivalent of the opening of 'the eyes of the heart' in the former prayer. If the specific activity of the strengthened inner man is in faith and love, the opening of the eyes is in order to vision, appreciation, desire, and pursuit. All these four qualities in their combination are of the essence of faith and love.

At the same time through this empowerment men are carried beyond the limits of selfish and hard-bound individualism. Only as they pass out from these limitations through faith can 'Christ

dwell in their hearts.' Only as they are 'rooted and grounded in love' to the utter destruction of all egoism can they 'be strong to apprehend' the blessedness that is theirs in the fellowship of Christ. This great description of an empowerment which stands for the highest self-realization through the utter destruction of self-assertion sets forth, therefore, all the essentials for the effective laying hold of the divine gift of love. The full content of this gift cannot be experienced until the whole 'fullness' of the infinite God enters in to fill and satisfy man's being for evermore. Such is the boundless prospect which these prayers open out to men in Christ Jesus. The only limitation is to be found in their lack of capacity to receive such infinite blessedness, and this defect is remedied through the power of the Spirit and the indwelling of Christ.

The transcendent life, the possibilities of which are so boundless, is life 'in the Spirit.' It is necessary, therefore, to examine carefully the doctrine of the Spirit as it is contained in this Epistle. As the starting-point the various passages in which the Spirit is expressly referred to must be set out. They are the following:

'In whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise' (i. 13).

'Through Him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father' (ii. 18).

'In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit' (ii. 22).

'The mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as

it hath now been revealed unto His holy Apostles and Prophets in the Spirit' (iii. 4, 5).

'That ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man' (iii. 16).

'Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit' (iv. 3, 4).

'And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption' (iv. 30).

'Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (vi. 17).

Finally, 'With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit' (vi. 18).

Besides these there is the petition that 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him' (i. 17), where, if the reference is not to '*the* Spirit,' the gift asked for stands in definite and close relations to the Spirit.

It will be observed that in several of these passages the Apostle describes a certain spiritual state as being 'in the Spirit.' Certain privileges and blessings are said to be enjoyed 'in the Spirit.' For example, access to the Father; the building together of believers for a habitation of God; the revelation of the mystery of Christ; and the sphere of 'all prayer and supplication' are said to be 'in the Spirit.' In certain other passages the Spirit is treated not so much as a sphere in which divine blessings are given and enjoyed as an operative force through which the grace and power of God attain their effect. For example, in the seal-

ing of believers 'with the Holy Spirit of promise'; in the strengthening of believers in the inward man through His—that is, through the Father's—Spirit; and in the reference to 'the sword of the Spirit' as the weapon to be used by believers. Furthermore, the Spirit is enumerated among the divine realities to which unity is attributed. 'There is one Spirit,' and 'the unity of the Spirit' is kept 'in the bond of peace.' Further, it is important to note that in one passage at least the personal consciousness of the Spirit is emphasized, for the exhortation 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God' has no intelligible meaning except on the assumption that the Spirit is personal. Hence at least these four salient features stand out—namely, that the Spirit is a sphere, an energy, an unity, and a personal consciousness.

The next thing to be observed is the close relationship between the state of being 'in Christ' and that of being 'in the Spirit.' The sealing of the Spirit, for example, takes effect on those who are 'in Christ' (i. 13). If access unto the Father is 'in one Spirit,' it is through Christ (ii. 18). The statement that believers 'are builded together for a habitation of God *in the Spirit*' is exactly parallel and equivalent to the preceding clause, which states 'in whom [namely, Jesus Christ] each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple *in the Lord*' (iii. 21). The express equivalence in this case might be extended over the whole context. Being in Christ Jesus and being in the Spirit are for the Apostle interchangeable expressions.

Each of the two is indispensable for the understanding of the other. This practical equivalence stands clearly revealed throughout the Epistle, but it does not depend upon observation or inference merely, for elsewhere St. Paul distinctly affirms, 'Now the Lord is the Spirit' (2 Cor. iii. 17), in a context wherein the Lord must certainly be taken to mean Christ.

It is not too much to say that being 'in the Spirit' stands for the whole experience of redemption, with its present enjoyment and unbounded prospect of blessedness. The whole meaning of salvation, as experienced and anticipated, is included in this, its indispensable, condition. The use of the expression, however, emphasizes certain outstanding aspects of the experience.

(1) To begin with, it is a state of exaltation. The consciousness of uplifting and enlargement is everywhere conveyed. This uplifting and enlargement has become a normal and permanent spiritual condition. Freedom, illumination, fullness of life, unlimited expansiveness, are the marks of being 'in the Spirit.' By it men are raised to a transcendent sphere, which yet is characterized by stability and ordered development. This state of being undoubtedly has emotional elements. Yet it is not in itself emotional. The exaltation of spirit by which it is marked is not merely or even pre-eminently that of ecstatic feeling. It is at least equally a condition of the mind which now sustains and is sustained by new and transcendent ideals. It is perhaps even more a condition of uplifted desire, of

steadfast resolution, of spiritual and moral determination. In a word, the exaltation is of the whole personality, and not merely of any one of its manifestations.

(2) This exaltation of personality has holiness as its characteristic mark. Just here, as has already been seen in another connexion, lies the distinction between the spiritual atmosphere of this Epistle and anything to be found elsewhere in the age in which it is written. Emancipation and exaltation were widely sought after. This demand is more than satisfied in the experience described in this Epistle. But the satisfaction is given under the indispensable condition of holiness. This condition is not a negative restraint, but a positive empowerment. Its various aspects are set forth as the special characteristic of life 'in the Spirit.' To begin with, it is an appropriation of God; that men may 'be holy and without blemish before Him in love' (i. 4). Such holiness is not their own achievement: 'Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise' (i. 13). Holiness is no longer conceived as an ecclesiastical or artificial calling—a ministry in sacred things. It is the fulfilment of the relationship of sonship through Jesus Christ unto God (i. 5). Hence its outstanding quality is love, and love fulfilled by such a spiritual transformation as entirely purges it from the selfish and fleshly implications which misrepresent its meaning and destroy its true energy. Thus 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (iv. 3), purity of heart and conduct, the ordering of human relationships, so that they reflect divine

perfection—all these are the marks of holiness as understood by the Apostle and the conditions which accompany and express the life of the Spirit.

(3) This life is, above all, set forth as a life of fellowship with God in which the divine and human interpenetrate one another. And the divine is made known, not as a mere energy of life or as a creative ideal of truth apprehended by the reason, but as holy perfection coming to its own in human hearts as alike the condition, the essence, and the consummation of fellowship with God. It is for this reason that holiness, which is essential to life in the Spirit, is not a restriction, but the true emancipation. It is simply the realization of the highest, and the highest in such central command that it attracts to itself and gives law to all other elements and interests of life. Its law is not imposed from without by constraint or even by self-discipline. Such self-discipline, so far as it is necessary to assert the authority of the Spirit over the refractory uprisings of the flesh, may be necessary in the imperfect stages of the spiritual life, but is a detraction from, not the perfection of, life in the Spirit. The dominance of the true and sanctified will may for the time being be secured only by vigorous assertion over partial and occasional mutinies of imagination, desire, and impulse. But when life ' in the Spirit ' comes to its full perfection, the need for such assertion passes away in a harmonious co-operation which includes even the instincts and impulses of human nature. As St. Paul tells the Romans, ' the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace.'

The whole of Rom. vi. to viii. should be studied in this connexion.

(4) This state of exaltation, holiness, and fellowship with God is effectuated by the Spirit. The suggestion of power, both creative and recreative, is associated with the Spirit. In this Epistle this association is not so much made by express statement as consistently implied throughout the whole context. The new state results from a redemptive quickening. This quickening is a forth-putting of the power which wrought in Christ when God raised Him from the dead (i. 20). But it is made sufficiently clear that the agent and energy of this power is the Spirit. His operation is transcendent, reaching men out of the sphere of the Divine Being. Yet it is also immanent, because of the foreordained and inmost relationship between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man. Life in the Spirit is life conveyed, maintained, and organized by the holy energy of God realized in and through the work of Christ.

(5) Finally, the Spirit, who through His divine energy recreates believers, sustains them in the exalted life of holiness, and brings them into fellowship with God, is Himself personal. This is implied throughout St. Paul's teaching in this Epistle, above all in the distinctive activity that is ascribed to the Spirit (i. 13), and in the exhortation not to ' grieve ' Him (iv. 30). Encompassing influence and empowering energy are implied in St. Paul's experience, and personality can only be encompassed and influenced, regenerated and satisfied, by personality. The whole of St. Paul's experience as he apprehends

and describes it is the living witness to this truth. Anything that is below the level of Divine Personality cannot reach the depths of human personality. St. Paul makes this clear whenever he speaks of his fellowship with God and of his union with Christ. His references to the Spirit and to the distinctive agency of the Spirit in the work of salvation are entirely similar. He is ensphered by a presence so sovereign, vital, and penetrating that it represents the intensest and most pervasive manifestation of personality. He is not merely affected by the Spirit, but controlled, guided, and inspired. And this activity of the Spirit reveals, not only power, but the free and deliberate exercise of it which resides only in personal character and will.

Such appear to be the outstanding marks of being 'in the Spirit,' treated as the characteristic experience of Christian life. It remains to consider the main features of the doctrine of the Spirit *in Himself* as distinguished from the Spirit *as experienced*. In doing so, let it be observed that St. Paul's teaching is not metaphysical. The elaborated distinctions of thought which came to mark Christian theology in later times, and particularly in the fourth and fifth centuries, are foreign to his mind and training. Wide as is the Apostle's intellectual vision and penetrating as is his psychological insight, neither his own temperament nor the needs of the Church in his time inclined him to minute definition or to abstract reasoning. We have instead the vivid expression of truth as it stood revealed to him and was intuitively apprehended in the spiritual

experience through which he passed. Yet this by no means implies any real vagueness in the Apostle's teaching, although some points in it may remain indeterminate.

(1) To begin with, the Apostle inherited and transformed a doctrine of the Spirit drawn from Old Testament sources. In the Old Testament, as in the New, the doctrine assumes various forms. It is now more universal and now more distinctive. In the most universal and least distinctive sense, for example, it is said that in the first stages of Creation 'the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters' (Gen. i. 2). Somewhat later on there is the warning, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever' (Gen. vi. 3), where a universal influence upon the human heart seems to be conveyed. More commonly, however, in the Old Testament the presence and activity of the Spirit are seen in, if not limited by, prophetic inspiration. It is through and in the Spirit of the Lord that prophets receive and declare the revelation of the Most High. Even where the Prophet anticipates the day when the manifestation and influence of the Spirit shall be universal, the emphasis is rather upon the extension of prophetic inspiration than upon His deeper and broader spiritual and moral influence. This, for example, is the case with the great aspiration of Moses, 'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!' (Num. xi. 29). It is true also of the prophecy of Joel, which predicts that when the Spirit should be poured forth upon all flesh,

'your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions' (Joel ii. 28). But whether the reference is to the working of the Spirit in creation or in inspiration, everywhere in the Old Testament His presence is associated with energy, activity, and informing power.

All this supplied what may be called the raw material for St. Paul's doctrine. But the higher and deeper experience of redemption in Christ lifted the doctrine of the Spirit entirely above the natural sphere, and also reduced His activity in the bestowment of prophetic and other special gifts to secondary importance. The experience of salvation in all its recreative and quickening power is such that in effect the whole of the Christian life is due to a real and continuous inspiration. This inspiration is through a constant indwelling of the Spirit, and this indwelling is so profoundly intimate and so pervasively sovereign that it shapes every manifestation of personality, not only in ecstatic moments, but throughout the ordinary conduct and concerns of life.

(2) St. Paul's doctrine of the Spirit is inseparable from his doctrine of Christ. To be 'in the Spirit' is practically equivalent to being 'in Christ.' If there be any knowledge of Christ which is not in the Spirit, it is only that knowledge after the flesh which St. Paul had long ago repudiated (2 Cor. v. 16). And though St. Paul builds upon the references to the Spirit which are found in the Old Testament, yet his doctrine of the original relationship of Christ to

Creation previous to His incarnation enabled him to treat these anticipations of the fuller activity of the Spirit as being not out of relation to Christ. In a somewhat similar sense St. Peter speaks of the Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets (1 Pet. i. 11). Yet while there may be a practical equivalence between being 'in the Spirit' and being 'in Christ,' the entire substance of St. Paul's teaching shows that the priority must be assigned to the latter. There is one passage, indeed, which seems at first sight to look the other way. The Apostle says that through Him—Christ—we 'both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father' (ii. 18). Here it appears that our Lord discharges His office as introducer (προσαγωγεύς) in the sphere of the Spirit. It is not difficult to see the reason for this. But, speaking broadly, it is 'in Christ,' according to St. Paul, that the activity of the Spirit is exerted. Indeed, this might almost be taken as a decisive mark of St. Paul's Christology. For him Christ is not so much a creature of the Spirit as creative of the Spirit—that is to say, of the Spirit as standing for the specific activity out of which the Christian life in its fullness arises. Christ is not merely the outstanding personality of the spiritual world. It is only through Christ, in Christ, and unto Christ that the spiritual world, as St. Paul apprehends it, comes to be. Hence in every respect the experienced presence and power of the Spirit is for St. Paul conditioned by Christ.

To begin with, the ampler gift and fuller manifestation of the Spirit are consequent on the coming of Christ and are experienced as the result of

preaching Christ. Christ is the great subject in connexion with which the Spirit operates. His influence grows out of the preaching of Christ and leads to the true apprehension and inward experience of its meaning. Nor is this a sufficient statement of the case. It is clear to any reader of this Epistle that the operations of the Spirit from first to last turn upon the redemptive work of Christ. It is true that this work fails of its effect apart from the agency of the Spirit. Yet that which the Spirit makes effectual is from beginning to end the redemptive work of Christ and the divine purpose in Christ. In this respect the reception of the Spirit marks both an end and a beginning. Believers were 'sealed with the Holy Spirit' as the result of their having heard and believed 'the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation' (i. 13). Yet it is 'the Holy Spirit *of promise*' who effects this sealing. By this is meant not merely that the Holy Spirit was promised aforetime, but that both His coming and His continuous operation are in themselves of the nature of a promise, creating hope and preparing the way for the final fulfilment. Hence this 'sealing' is an 'earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession' (i. 13, 14).

(3) It is manifest, therefore, that St. Paul's doctrine sets forth a triune manifestation of God. This is made as clear in the declaration 'through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father' (ii. 18) as it is in the triune benediction (2 Cor. xiii. 14). This threefold manifestation may be said to

be that of God transcendent, God self-revealing and redemptive, and God immanent. Yet St. Paul by no means treats these three as merely aspects or successive phases of the life and activity of God in the sense of Sabellius. Distinctively personal activity and relations are implied. There are threefold and simultaneous relations of the Godhead to the subjects of salvation, and hence a corresponding threefold relationship—that of Father, Son, and Spirit—within the Godhead. It is true that these relationships are neither formally conceived nor closely defined. The distinction between the Son and the Spirit, while never lost sight of, is not always emphasized, just because their activity is both coextensive and interpenetrative. The doctrine of St. Paul in general and of this Epistle in particular provides the basis and the substance of subsequent definitions. Yet dogmatists would do well to mark the comparative fluidity of St. Paul's teaching, which corresponds to the spiritual experience of believers in Christ. The triune distinctions in the Godhead, both economic and personal, are never so pressed by St. Paul as to endanger the unity of the divine life or to divide an activity which, though threefold, is yet one. Hence no clearer expression of St. Paul's doctrine of the Godhead is anywhere to be found than in the saying that has so often been quoted, which sums up both the activity of God and the experience of believers, 'Through Him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father.'

CHAPTER IX

THE CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH

1. The Church

The previous chapter has dealt with the personal experience of redemption and of life in the Spirit. It is in producing such personal experience that the work of Christ has both its consummation and its effective revelation. Only as men receive and enjoy the adoption of sons does the transcendent work of Christ on their behalf achieve its spiritual and moral results. The boundless prospects of life and blessedness opened out in this Epistle depend for their realization, and in a sense for their very existence, upon human personalities being so quickened, transformed, and enlarged as to be capable of apprehending and entertaining the infinite possibilities of life in Christ.

This, however, does not mean that this personal experience is individualist in its nature. On the contrary, just because it is so profoundly personal it is of necessity social. These two elements, the individual and the social, may be distinguished and even set over against one another in abstract thought. But in life they are interdependent. The full realization of each can only be brought about in

and through that of the other. This most important fact, to which we are led both by observation and reflection, is made clearly manifest in the Epistle to the Ephesians. If it is in one aspect the Epistle of personality, quickened and satisfied in Christ, it is equally and concurrently the Epistle of the Christian commonwealth, the Catholic Church. From first to last it is a living fellowship which the Apostle sets forth, and he describes it in several outstanding passages of the Epistle. He makes it clear at every point that the fullness of the gift in Christ Jesus is only to be enjoyed in such fellowship. His primary concern is not with the constitution, but with the vital meaning of the Church of Christ. He has, of course, important things to say about the Church as an organized institution, with set and indeed elaborate offices of ministry. Yet there is no trace of that rigidity which regards the Church as an externally constituted organization into which men are brought in order that the redemptive and quickening power of Christ may be exerted upon them. The external and institutional side of the Church of Christ is the necessary but the subordinate consequence of its spiritual and vital relations. Here again the starting-point is to be found in ' the adoption of sons.' The relationship of sonship, when shared, implies in itself the family ties of brotherhood in which love even in its filial aspect has its complete expression. The life and power of sonship is in itself creative of the intimate and complex bonds of family life. Let the family expand, and it becomes of necessity a community.

In other words, the family of God becomes the Catholic Church. The Church is created, sustained, and ordered by the spiritual forces which knit men of kindred life together. The new life in Christ by its very nature creates and conserves the social relationships in which its inmost nature can be expressed and enriched. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a life of personal sonship towards God existing apart from the life of human fellowship in God ; of fellowship, therefore, pre-eminently with men who share a like spiritual experience. Thus while the reception of the gift of sonship is in itself social, the ever-growing realization of what is involved in sonship leads to a concurrent deepening and extending of the life of fellowship. Growth in the one is impossible without corresponding growth in the other. The two are not only inseparable, but practically indistinguishable.

Hence there are four distinctive features about the teaching of the Epistle to the Ephesians on this subject. (1) The fellowship which it sets forth is transcendent. It is the manward and earthward expression of divine and heavenly relationships. (2) It is spiritual and vital, growing naturally and necessarily out of the living relationships in which it takes its rise and giving ever-fuller effect to them. The bond is inward rather than external. It is external only as giving actuality to these higher and inward relationships. (3) Hence, again, it is specific and distinctive, not vague and elusive. The Church is a body, an organized community. It is plainly recognizable in its members, its ministry,

and its organization. (4) Yet, finally, it is not complete in itself and rigidly exclusive of mankind beyond its limits. In its ministry, the ministry of apostles and prophets, it reaches out towards an ever-enlarging fulfilment in which the spiritual possibilities of mankind, constituted in Christ and redeemed by Him, shall eventually be realized. This ministry which seeks all mankind (see iii. 9) is not artificial, nor is it exercised merely out of obedience to Christ looked upon as an external sovereign. It gives expression to Christ's sovereignty as living and immanent head of His Church, conveying to it such ideals, sympathies, and strivings as must needs seek expression in a world-embracing activity that corresponds to the universal and spiritual lordship of Christ.

The Christian Church is constituted in Christ. It owes to Him its life, its nature, its unity, and its catholicity. All that it becomes springs out of and gives effect to what Christ is. Its law is set forth in His life. It has no existence apart from Him. His transcendent sovereignty over it is realized only in His immanent, vital, and characteristic energy diffused throughout the whole. Men do not unite with one another in order that they may commemorate, imitate, and serve Christ. They become united to Him by His own redemptive and quickening activity, and thereby become united to one another. Hence the nature, the power, and the mission of the Church are to be sought in Christ. The ideal after which its spirit and activities are to be modelled, by which its lapses and perversions

are to be criticized and corrected, is to be found, not in some model of an external organization, but in a living and complete apprehension of what He is both in Himself and as energizing the whole community which finds its life in Him. It is of the utmost importance to note this outstanding feature of St. Paul's teaching in this Epistle and elsewhere. In passing to the subject of the Church, we are not passing away from the subject of Christ to something that has a separate or separable existence from Him.

This mystic doctrine of the Church is set forth above all in the characteristic teaching of St. Paul concerning the Body of Christ. The Church is ' His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all ' (i. 23). The same figure is used elsewhere in St. Paul's writings, notably in Rom. xii. 4, 5 and in 1 Cor. xii. 12–27. The minor variations in these passages need not detain us. It is sufficient to note that the higher spiritual aspects of the doctrine have their fullest expression in our Epistle. Christ is ' the head ' of the Church, and His headship is of the most vital and far-reaching character. There is no questioning or passing beyond His authority, for He is head ' over all things ' to the Church. It is true that without the Church Christ remains unfulfilled. His Christhood is a mere potentiality, an abstraction, except in so far as it is realized in the Church. The Church is His body. The head and the body by the very conception are interdependent. The primacy of the head can only be fulfilled through the body as its instrument.

So much is plain. Yet the body is more than the instrument of the head. It is in such vital union with the head as that, while dependent for its energy and direction upon the head, it makes its own contribution to the fulfilled life of which it is a subordinate element and part. St. Paul expressly extends this conception of vital interdependence to the relations between Christ and the Church. The Church is the fullness of Christ; makes up in vital union with and dependence upon Christ that in which even He would be lacking if it were not for the Church. This dependence of Christ upon the Church for the fulfilment of His Christhood as its head does not belittle, but magnifies His headship. At the same time the whole conception suggests the most intimate relations between the two, relations which even the figure selected cannot fully express. Christ not merely represents, but *presents* the Church 'in the heavenly places' (ii. 6). The Church, on the other hand, manifests as well as serves Christ on the earth. Though this figure, and indeed any figure, is inadequate fully to represent the union which St. Paul sets forth, yet it is specially fitted to convey the union of transcendence and immanence which is the distinctive feature of Christ's lordship over the Church. To the head belongs not merely the glory, but the directive supremacy over the body. It is true that this supremacy can only be made good in the maintenance of the wholeness and healthfulness of the entire body. Yet in discharging its protective, directive, and energizing func-

tions over the whole body the supremacy of the head is fulfilled and magnified. Hence what may be called the transcendent primacy of the head can only be fulfilled in and through its immanent contribution of energy to the whole body, in the living fellowship of life. Unless, therefore, Christ passed beyond headship, narrowly understood, He could not be 'head over all things to His body, the Church.' The anatomical dissection of theological abstraction gives no full expression to the complete fact of spiritual and evangelical life.

Another figure under which the relations between Christ and the Church are set forth is that of the temple. The Catholic Church is 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit' (ii. 20–22). There is some difficulty about the rendering of this passage. It seems at first sight strange that the Apostle, who is clearly emphasizing the complete unity of the Church, should refer to 'each several building.' Moreover, the word translated 'temple' means the inmost sanctuary or shrine in which God Himself resides. In the examples which suggested this figure the sanctuary, while the most sacred, is the smallest part of the whole edifice. It seems difficult, therefore, to understand how 'each several building,' thus considered separately, should grow into such a sanctuary. Hence some render the passage 'the

whole building' instead of 'each several building.' The point is not of first-rate importance. It cannot be decided by merely grammatical considerations or even by the rigid application of the Apostle's figure. For, after all, in dealing with the Catholic Church, St. Paul has to deal with an institution which, while universal, has a local existence here and there. The fact of such local distinctions could least of all be overlooked in a circular letter addressed to a group of Churches. The very fact that the Apostle was addressing such distinct communities of Christians would in itself be enough to suggest to his mind the existence of several buildings. But all these Churches are one. While the mystical significance of the Church holds good of each local Church, yet each such Church exists in real, even if potential, relations to the universal Church. But on the practical side the realization of this complete unity comes by gradual stages. It is a growth. It needed time and many powerful influences to develop complete unity and all the possibilities of intercommunion between one Church and another, especially when they were divided by distances hard to be traversed, and by racial peculiarities still harder to be surmounted. Indeed, the process of such practical unification has never been completed, and from time to time has been roughly checked. Still, there can be no doubt of the destination and tendency of 'each several building.' Their common growth is 'unto a holy temple in the Lord.' And whatever may have been the case with the actual structure of ancient temples,

'each several building' of the Church must be in equally immediate relation to the indwelling of God. That indwelling can be no other than the closest and most sacred. In this case, therefore, both the whole and each several part must be a sanctuary—the actual habitation of God and not merely accessory to it. Hence the Apostle, turning from the universal and impersonal aspects of the subject to the more practical and personal, concludes by saying, 'In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God in the Spirit.' Thus both the higher reason and the literal facts of the case in regard to the Church seem to require that the figure of the temple-building should be treated with such freedom as to enable it by a departure from the lower actuality of existing architectural examples to set forth more completely the higher reality. From this standpoint the rendering of the Revised Version is to be upheld. Yet, however this may be, the main teaching in regard to the Catholic Church is clear.

The most obvious truth presented to one who watched the actual process of evangelization was that the Church was 'built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets,' namely, of the most responsible missionaries and preachers to whose labours the founding of the Church here and there was immediately due. But this suggestion immediately gives place to one of far greater importance. Jesus Christ is 'the chief corner stone' upon whom the weight of the building rests and to whom the unquestioned primacy belongs. Yet it is not

sufficient to set forth the relationship of Christ to the Church as that of the chief corner stone to the whole building. Its several parts are growing 'unto a holy temple *in the Lord*.' He is essential to the unity of the whole. He is both its ground-plan and its cement. Still more, He is the living ideal through and in which the Church comes to realization. Just as in the vital relations of the head and the body the head both gives to and receives from the body in the fellowship of fulfilled life, so in the temple He who is the chief corner stone is effectively present, shaping and upholding every part. He is indispensable to each living stone, and each living stone, in its turn, helps to fulfil the design which is laid down complete in Him.

The two figures of the body and of the building are most important and suggestive. Yet, after all, the Church is a community, and therefore the figures of citizenship and nationhood naturally suggest themselves to the Apostle's mind. They not only take their place side by side with the rest, but in some respects assume the predominance. The Church is a city, the city of God. This city is in heaven, and not on earth. The members of the Church have entered upon its citizenship. They are the people of God. Nay, more, they are of His household (ii. 19). They form part of the commonwealth, of the people, of God. In setting forth the nature of this commonwealth, St. Paul emphasizes again and again its catholic nature. The Mystery of Christ, as it has been revealed to the Apostle,

makes known 'that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel' (iii. 6). The Gentiles are no longer 'strangers and sojourners,' but are 'fellow citizens with the saints' (ii. 19). Because of the world-embracing purpose of God in Christ Jesus, 'this grace' has been given to St. Paul 'to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ' (iii. 8). Throughout the whole of the Epistle the Apostle sounds the note of triumphant exultation when he deals with this aspect of his subject. His prolonged conflict to secure the absolute equality of Jew and Gentile in the Church of Christ has issued in complete victory. Reservations, against which the Apostle fought in the first days at Antioch and subsequently in the Galatian controversy, have been entirely destroyed. There can be no question now either of treating the Gentiles as inferior to the Jews or of insisting upon any customs and observances which place Gentiles at a disadvantage. Christ has 'made both one' (ii. 14). And the ground of their unity is to be found in the great act of universal redemption, which knows no restriction and becomes effective in a sphere that is high above 'the law of commandments contained in ordinances' (ii. 15). Christ has made 'of the twain one new man, so making peace' (ii. 15). Hence the Church is a new institution founded upon a universal basis hitherto unknown. As St. Paul says in a closely related passage of the Epistle to the Colossians, 'There cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and

uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all, and in all' (Col. iii. 11). This triumph is sufficiently well established to be assumed and stated, not contended for. The victory is so recent that it is meet still to celebrate it with fresh enthusiasm and exultation. Hence this Epistle above all marks the triumphant close of the Apostle's career and the successful inauguration of the Christian order. It is in a pre-eminent sense the Epistle of the Catholic Church.

Yet the new order of things does not obliterate the past. The Christian Church enters into the heritage of Israel; though this inheritance is enlarged and enriched by the fulfilment of all its promise in Christ and by its extension to include mankind redeemed and quickened in Him. Hence all the leading characteristics of the Old Testament commonwealth are transferred to the Christian Church with deepened and enlarged significance. This is made sufficiently clear even in the first chapter of the Epistle, which sets forth the act of foreordaining and appropriating grace by which God enters into possession of His own inheritance (i. 11, 18), and thereby believers enter into theirs (i. 14). But what is suggested in the first chapter is made explicit in the second. And it is treated by way of contrast, the contrast between the privileges which the Gentiles now enjoy in the Church and their unhappy position before. The privileges of the Church were in principle and in promise enjoyed beforehand by the Jews to the temporary exclusion of the Gentiles. Now these

privileges in their fulfilment are equally shared between the two. The privileges are continuous; but the community that enjoys them has been enlarged by the destruction of all national restrictions. Hence the Apostle reminds his readers 'that aforetime ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world' (ii. 11, 12).

This description, gloomy as it may seem, rests upon a twofold basis—the Jewish standpoint and the actual facts of the case. The Old Testament standpoint in regard to the Gentiles, which had shown certain fluctuations in the course of the centuries, had by the Apostle's time narrowed into the Judaist exclusiveness in which he had himself been brought up. The earlier fluctuations which are so clearly marked in the Old Testament were indeed inevitable. The spiritual leaders of the people, who knew that it was in possession of the true religion, and yet that this religion was constantly in danger of being submerged, perverted, or ruthlessly destroyed by surrounding heathenism, were bound to magnify the distinctions which separated Israel from the rest of mankind. Sometimes the prophetic message was directed to the maintenance of the national existence in the face of overwhelming odds. Sometimes, and more frequently, the efforts of the Prophets were directed to maintaining the purity

and unfolding the meaning of the faith. In either case they were constrained to insist, not merely upon its unique holiness and truth as the revelation of God and the promise of His Kingdom, but also, because of all this, upon the apartness of Israel from all surrounding peoples. The appropriation of Israel by the one true God carried with it separation from the rest of mankind. This fact is taken for granted throughout. The fluctuations belong to the next stage. Is this separation final, or does Israel hold the faith for the eventual salvation of the world? The latter view is frequently set forth in the prophetic writings, and is indeed predominant in the more generous minds and at times when the contact of Israel with heathen people was such as to strengthen the belief that the chosen people was eventually to become the evangelist of mankind. It is necessary to note these features of Old Testament teaching, though it is impossible to pursue them. In this Epistle it is made strikingly manifest how fully St. Paul had inherited both elements of the Old Testament tradition. In the passage immediately before us he emphasizes the spiritual exclusiveness of Israel in the sense in which he had received it from his youth up. Yet, as the matter is presented here, it is impossible to charge the Apostle with any lingering narrowness, for he is conscious of embodying in himself the commission to evangelize mankind, which some of the Prophets had discerned to be the final glory of Israel. Furthermore, he is here celebrating the fulfilment, in earnest at least, of this world-embracing purpose of God. Hence the

chapter is remarkable for two striking contrasts, the contrast between Jew and Gentile in the past, and also the contrast between the Gentile as he was and as he now is in Christ.

These contrasts rest not upon theory or prejudice. They were brought home by the plain facts of which his readers were well aware. They knew that they had been 'without hope and without God in the world.' The Apostle's description of their 'former manner of life' (iv. 22), with its appalling spiritual and moral evils, answered only too closely to their own painful memories. Their entrance into the new commonwealth had been brought about by a change which meant nothing less than putting off 'the old man' and putting on 'the new man' (iv. 22–24). It is from the standpoint of their present experience, above all, that the Apostle describes their past as having meant total exclusion from the commonwealth of Israel, and thereby from Christ, and hope, and God.

The inclusion of the Gentiles in the commonwealth of redeemed humanity is described in terms of the Old Testament as brought about in Christ. The reference throughout the concluding portion of the chapter (ii. 13–18) is to the Covenant, with its peace-offering, which stands for complete reconciliation and permanently established fellowship. The Atonement of Christ is seen in the light of the ancient sacrifices. The community of access in one Spirit unto the Father (ii. 18) is the heavenly counterpart of the access of Israel to God in the wilderness, when 'they beheld God, and did eat and drink'

(Exod. xxiv. 11). The life 'in Christ Jesus' in which they who 'once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ' (ii. 13) is the life of the true Israel established upon the everlasting covenant of peace.

Having dealt with the subject from the standpoint of the Covenant, the Apostle passes on in the third chapter to treat it from that of 'the Mystery' (iii. 1–13). The meaning of this term has already been generally dealt with, and it is only necessary to add that the secret of Christ which has been revealed is so essentially that of universal grace and redemption in love that the inclusion of the Gentiles in the knowledge and enjoyment of salvation cannot be treated as an accidental part, but is at the very centre of the Mystery itself. 'That the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel' (iii. 6), and that the Apostle has a commission 'to make all men see what is the dispensation of the Mystery' (iii. 9), these bear outstanding witness to 'the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' The change of figure gives prominence to a new conception of the corporate life of the Church. The figure of the Covenant suggested reconciliation, redemption, and consecration as the basis of fellowship with God and of fellowship in the heavenly commonwealth. The figure of the Mystery suggests initiation, illumination, the conveyance of the higher life with renovating power. The fellowship of believers, Jew and Gentile, is brought about, not only on the basis of a Covenant of reconciliation that includes both, but in the knowledge of a divine

and life-giving secret, which unites them together and distinguishes them, for the present, from the rest of mankind.

While the figure of initiation into the Mystery is important, it is clearly subordinate in the Apostle's thought to that of the Covenant. St. Paul insists throughout upon the divine purpose of grace in Christ Jesus. The Covenant is inseparably bound up with divine grace. The relationships it creates and the blessings it confers spring out of the free will and the condescending mercy of God. Moreover, the Covenant gives assurance that the exercise of this mercy and beneficence is a consistent purpose of God upon which man may count. It becomes the basis of all His subsequent dealings with mankind. It is on this basis of the common enjoyment of God's mercy that His people are bound together in an elect and holy fellowship. And the emphasis throughout is upon the fact that their common relations to one another are grounded in and spring out of their common relationship to God in His covenant of grace.

This predominant conception of grace and its steadfast purpose is carried over into the Apostle's reference to the Mystery. As the Apostle describes his own ministry and the initiation of the Gentiles into ' the Mystery of Christ,' he magnifies its source in grace from first to last. If men come to see ' what is the dispensation of the Mystery ' (iii. 9), this is not their own discovery or even that of the Apostles and teachers, but is a thing ' revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit ' (iii. 5). This

revelation is one of the blessings attendant upon redemption and reconciliation. Nay, as will be seen more fully later on, the revelation is contained in the act of redemption.

The next passage to be considered is that in which St. Paul describes the end for which the ministry of the Church has been given. This is described as being 'for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him, which is the head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love' (iv. 12–16). It is needless to expound this passage in detail. It will be seen at a glance how the preceding figures shed their light upon it. The conception of the body is predominant throughout, yet it is said twice over to be 'built up.' The body also is 'fitly framed and knit together.' Yet that which gives to it this harmonious strength is the pervasive love which suggests at once the enlarged family of the divine commonwealth. Initiation into the truth and illumination must needs be the

means by which men are saved from being ' tossed to and fro,' ' after the wiles of error.' Yet all these suggestions are now combined in a new thought; that, namely, of the Church as the Body of Christ *growing* until it attains its destined maturity. It is clear that if the Church is to come ' unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,' this involves a long process during which its vital forces must be developed by the aid of many ministries both of nurture and education. Moreover, while the physical aspects of the illustration are in the foreground, it is manifest that they do not exhaust the content of the Apostle's figure, let alone the fullness of his thought. The body is to ' grow up in all things unto Him, which is the head, even Christ.' Such growth is more than physical. It is intellectual and moral. In every case of physical development the maturity of the body is so accompanied and assisted by the growing maturity of the mind that its physical fitness is above all that of mental control and of disciplined subservience to the purposes of the head. Hence St. Paul here presents the conception of the Church as the subject and sphere of prolonged processes of spiritual, moral, and in a measure of intellectual culture. These processes are collective. They are intended to perfect, not merely groups of individuals as such, but a body in which each individual finds perfection by losing all that is selfish and exclusive in his individuality through entering into the larger whole of love. Yet this collective concern

can only be promoted by such concentration of the Church's care upon its individual members that they 'may be no longer children.' It is important to note how, in the comprehensive spirit that is his wont, the Apostle thus unites his teaching about the Church as already enjoying the fullness of the redemption in Christ Jesus with that of its continuous spiritual and moral training, in order that it may reach what is as yet a far-distant goal.

Of this growth the attainment of unity is a vital and, from certain points of view, the principal mark. The Apostle describes unity as the goal rather than the starting-point. He says, '*Till* we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (iv. 13). This process is further described as 'growing up in all things into Him which is the head, even Christ.' The Apostle is able to take for granted a certain measure of unity at the outset. But it is inchoate, and can only be fulfilled and made perfect by the spiritual development that gives full control to the head, and thereby the vigour of perfect health and efficiency to all the members. Only growth 'into the head' can accomplish this. It is from Christ the Head, and from Him alone, that 'all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love' (iv. 16). The unity is vital rather than institutional. It is that of an organism rather than of an organiza-

tion. The growth of the former involves, no doubt, that of the latter, and makes it possible. Yet organization is unfruitful and even dangerous apart from life. The vigour of the Church as a body is not increased by the elaboration of its organization, but by the inspiration of ever fuller life. The only building up of the body is 'in love,' which marks the perfecting of the relationships between all its members, and in order to this the perfecting of the spiritual development of each one. From the first word to the last the Apostle insists exclusively, not upon any unification in and through the ministries of the Church and its external regulations, but on the attainment of unity through vital interpenetration between Christ and His members on the level of 'the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,' and in that absolute truth, or veracity, of love which knows no restriction or reservation in the spiritual fellowship into which it enters. If unity, therefore, be broken, we may surely infer that it cannot be repaired by the lower and external means of organization, but must be reknit by a common growth into Christ, from whom all the body will eventually be 'fitly framed and knit together' in the mutual receptiveness and service which can only come from perfecting in love.

The last suggestion as to the relations between Christ and His Church is that of marriage (v. 22–23). It is true that the reference upon this point is not quite explicit. The headship of Christ over the Church is treated as the type of the headship of the husband over the wife (v. 23). The love which

husbands should show to their wives has as its standard 'even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it' (v. 25). The members of the Church are members of Christ's Body (v. 30). And husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. 'He that loveth his own wife loveth himself' (v. 28). Had we only this passage it might be doubtful whether St. Paul specifically likened the relationship between Christ and the Church to that of marriage, or whether he simply selected the unity, the headship, the love and self-sacrifice which mark the relation of Christ to His Body, the Church, as so many features to be reproduced in a distinct though analogous relationship, namely, that between husband and wife. But another passage elsewhere specifically applies the illustration of marriage to the union between Christ and His Church, for in the Epistle to the Romans the Apostle, in treating of bondage to the law and subsequent emancipation from it, does so under the figure of marriage. He proceeds to say: 'Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God' (Rom. vii. 4). This latter passage has the appearance of a passing illustration, although it is carried out in fullness of detail. Yet it is clear from the passage now before us that marriage had a permanent place in St. Paul's mind as setting forth the relationship between Christ and His Church. The fact that this is the case enables him completely to transform the con-

ception of the marriage tie by introducing into it new ideals and a new spirit derived from the relationship between Christ and His Church. As the Fatherhood of God revealed in Christ has become the archetype of all true fatherhood, so the Headship of Christ supplies the permanent ideal of the headship of the husband in the relationship of marriage. It is the headship of perfectly protective and self-sacrificing love in which the personality of the wife is treated as sacred and becomes the object of the unselfish care in which the headship is perfected. The unity is so great that men are to treat their wives as themselves. Yet the conditions of such unity are those of love, which can only subsist by the development and not by the suppression of the personality that corresponds with it. So Christ's headship is absolute. Yet the very nature of the relationship between Him and His Church would be destroyed were not His headship so entirely rooted and grounded in His love, and made manifest in His self-sacrifice, that the perfection of His headship depends upon such perfecting of His Church as to enable it to enter into the highest and holiest fellowship of His love. Hence this figure comes in at the end to supplement all the rest. Taken by themselves, the figures of the body and of the temple-building might be so pressed as to exaggerate the headship of Christ in a sense unfavourable to the free and full development of the personality, whether of the Church as a whole or of its members in particular. The figure of the commonwealth, on the other hand, carefully guarded though it is, might seem

to leave Christ and His Church too far apart. In itself it might tolerate the suggestion of too unrestricted a freedom and diversity between Him and the citizens whom He has emancipated. But this last figure, while charged with reminiscences of the others, brings into prominence the new and all-important element of the perfecting of personality in the high and heavenly relationship that respects and yet transcends personal distinctions. Hence the object of Christ's self-sacrifice on behalf of the Church is said to be 'that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it might be holy and without blemish in love' (v. 27).[1]

Such, in brief, is the doctrine of the Catholic Church in its relations to God in Christ as it is presented to us in this Epistle. Its ethical consequences must be dealt with at a later stage. Meanwhile, it is sufficient to note that the spiritual constitution of the Church lays down the first principle of its ethical life. It is a unity founded upon and inextricably bound up with other unities. 'There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all' (iv. 4–6). The unity of the Church is therefore built up, strengthened, and made vital on every plane of its existence, by every one of the relationships into which its members

[1] For the exposition of this passage, see chap. xi.

enter, by every motive which impels them, and by every ministry that serves them. This is the primary spiritual fact with which the temper and conduct of each member and, it may be added, the collective spirit of the Church as a whole should be in accord. The fuller treatment of this principle and of its consequences must be for the present postponed.

We have seen how the Church is related to Christ and to God in Christ. Those who are incorporated in Christ by a living faith thereby come to enjoy all the blessings of redemption and all the privileges of the sons of God as they are set forth in this Epistle. But it should be added that it is not by entrance into the Church as a visible organization that these blessings come to be enjoyed. It is the other way about. The critical event upon which all else depends is the coming into living personal relations with Christ, 'in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation—in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of His glory' (i. 13, 14). The bringing about of this personal relatedness to Christ introduces believers to the new fellowship of reconciliation and sonship towards God and to the new relations of union in love with His body, the Church, and all its members.

But what is the relationship of the Catholic Church, as thus constituted in Christ and conditioned by His life, with the rest of mankind? The Church,

as has been said, is Catholic in the sense that it includes Jew and Gentile in one fellowship upon equal terms. Both are subject to a universal need, are reached by one redemption, and become partakers of a common blessedness. This catholicity has already begun to manifest itself before the Apostle's eyes in a threefold way. The Church has already been planted in many lands and among many races. In many of these local Churches various races have been intermingled in an intimate fellowship which has blotted out all distinctions of race, class, and tradition. Furthermore, these local Churches under Apostolic guidance are reaching out towards a wider corporate life which knits 'joints and bands' between them, bringing Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Rome, and Ephesus, to speak only of the great centres, into living intercommunion with one another. A new humanity is arising which, while it respects, yet transcends all the human relationships that have existed heretofore. How does this new humanity stand related to mankind as a whole? It is clearly an elect. The new and heavenly commonwealth is as distinctively set apart to the fellowship and service of God as was Israel of old. And its election is made good by even mightier influences—mightier because they more thoroughly transform the personality of each, and because their full force has been felt by each individual member of the new humanity. This elect people is therefore distinguished from the rest of mankind by the transforming experience of redemption in Christ which has come to each member of it, and has given each his place as a fellow citizen

'with the saints and of the household of God.' Yet distinction does not mean separation. The body thus spiritually created does not recoil from contact with the larger whole of mankind that surrounds it. Its creation and growth is the condition and earnest of the eventual transformation of mankind. It is true that this is never expressly stated in the Epistle, nor does the revelation contained in the spiritual facts warrant us in drawing any conclusion that would include the whole of mankind without individual exceptions. Any such larger hope cannot be based upon the facts and forces displayed in the actual life of the Church or in its influence upon mankind. Such an all-embracing inclusion of mankind without exception is difficult in face of the stubborn facts of experience. It can certainly not be gathered from any clear statement of this Epistle. Even if the reading 'to make all men see' (iii. 9) were more certain than it is,[1] it would not warrant certainty that the end would be completely realized, although it would convey an explicit assurance that 'all men' are sought by the love of God, have in them the capacity to receive redemption and illumination in Christ, and should be sought after by the ministry of the Church. All this is made clear by the general spirit and teaching of the Epistle. But beyond this, nothing is affirmed, while, in previous writings of St. Paul, statements are made which are inconsistent with universalism, as implying the final salvation of all men without individual exceptions. Indeed, if such universalism is to be entertained, it

[1] See note on page 111.

must be based, as most of its advocates admit, upon general considerations concerning the character of God as displayed in the gospel, and not upon either specific statements of the New Testament or upon the facts of human experience. With this reservation, however, it is clear that the new humanity of the Church is treated in this Epistle and elsewhere as, to use St. James's expression, 'a kind of firstfruits of His creatures' (Jas. i. 18). As St. Paul says in the part of his Epistle to the Romans which has done more than anything else to create an impression of the severity of his doctrines, 'For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? And if the firstfruit is holy, so is the lump: and if the root is holy, so are the branches' (Rom. xi. 15, 16). According to this Epistle, the Church consists of those who first enjoy the riches of a grace which contemplates 'a dispensation of the fullness of the time to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth' (i. 8–10). This universal purpose explains the world-embracing commission which has been given to the Apostle 'to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things' (iii. 9). This divine purpose and far-reaching prospect inspires such hope in the Apostle as nerves him for his labours. But in this self-revelation he seeks to impart this hope to the Churches. They, being the firstfruits of his labour, are in such spiritual solidarity with him that their hopes and desires and prayers are centred

upon him as their spiritual representative. Their main service to the world-wide triumph of Christ is to be found in the revelation which they bring even 'unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places' of 'the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus, our Lord' (iii. 10, 11). Thus the Church, with its Catholic life, stands related, on the one hand, to the eternal purpose of God to which its members owe their salvation, and, on the other, to the world-embracing ministry of St. Paul, the pattern of all subsequent ministries, by which the purpose of God will reach its final accomplishment and the fullness of mankind be gathered in. Hence the elect character of the Church contains a promise and earnest of eventual inclusion; not a sentence of exclusion. The life of Christ which abounds in it is a life which puts forth all the energies of grace, in order to gather in and transform the world.

2. The Ministry

The Epistle deals not only with the Catholic Church, but also with the Christian ministry: first of all, with the apostolic ministry of St. Paul, and then with the more ordinary ministries by which the extension and edification of the Church are promoted. St. Paul, having dealt with the divine commonwealth of the Catholic Church, passes by an easy and natural transition to speak of his own apostolic mission and labours in its behalf (iii. 1–14). The nature and functions of the Christian ministry are herein made manifest in his own typical example.

His statement throws full light upon the spiritual conditions under which, and the spiritual ends for which, his ministry was exercised.

1. It is clear at first sight that the ministry rests upon and grows out of a profound spiritual experience. The practical aims of the Apostle's life are given to him, not as detached and external directions, but as part of the living unity of his fellowship with Christ. His Epistle enables his readers to perceive his 'understanding in the Mystery of Christ' (iv. 4), into which he has been initiated. His ministry is the gift of a special divine grace, or favour, 'which was given me according to the working of His power' (iii. 7; see also ii. 8). His mission is 'to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ' (iii. 8), a message which can only be delivered as the result of a deep, ever-growing, and illimitable experience. On no other ground is it possible to speak of '*the unsearchable riches of Christ*.' There are three stages of this experience. First, *Christ*; personal acquaintance with and apprehension of Him as Redeemer, Lord, and Love. Then *the riches* of Christ, as contact with Him brings to the spirit the wealth, power, and satisfaction that are in Him and are shared by Him with those who are so joined with Him as to become one Spirit. Lastly, the *unsearchable* riches of Christ, as the intimacy of unbroken fellowship leads on and on, till the believer finds that the source from which he is continually enriched is boundless as God Himself and rewards a pursuit extended to the infinite and

eternal. Hence the Apostle's ministry rests exclusively upon this experience of Christ. Herein is given the latest statement of the fact which he had long before declared in a more controversial form to the Galatians when he told them, 'as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ' (Gal. i. 11, 12). The reception and discharge of this ministry therefore depend entirely upon the integrity of the Apostle's relations with our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Hence the object of St. Paul's ministry is to give full expression to the meaning and purpose of Christ by promoting the ends of Christ both extensively and intensively. The Apostle's object is 'to make all men see' (iii. 9). His sphere is never narrower than mankind, and his first endeavour is to reach those who are outside. As his ministry knows no restriction, so it tolerates no reservation. The offer to the Gentiles is of 'the unsearchable riches of Christ' in all the wealth of their unexplored infinity. The inspiring zeal which seeks the lost and lowliest of mankind will offer to them nothing poorer than the 'breadth and length and height and depth.' The Apostle would make all men *see*, with a spiritual apprehension that centres all the faculties upon Christ and enables Him to be appropriated with all the intensity and fullness of personal possession.

St. Paul's ministry for the Church is included in his service of Christ and his ceaseless endeavours to

reach mankind. This makes all the difference. The Apostle's relationship to the Christ who 'ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things' (iv. 10), will not permit his ministry to be limited to the narrow confines of the existing Church. In its ideals, sympathies, and practical aims his particular service to the Church lies within his universal service on behalf of Christ to mankind. Yet in this universal setting his ministry to the Church is all-important, for the Church is not merely an instrument of the world-embracing purpose of God. The Church is the earnest of this fulfilment. The promise and potency of the Kingdom of heaven, or of life in Christ which is its equivalent, are already being revealed in and by means of the Church. Hence the extensive ministry of the Apostle can only be fulfilled in close conjunction with his intensive ministry of prayer and influence in order that the members of the Church 'may be filled unto all the fullness of God' (iii. 19). Thus the Apostle's life and labours are the outward expression of Christ—His work, His purpose, His inmost heart of love.

3. Again, St. Paul's ministry stands for the central purpose of God, the redemptive and satisfying end which alike explains and justifies the meaning and process of the world. His task is not accidental or subordinate. The ministry of grace consummates history, unifies all the divine forces that govern its evolution, and gives to the whole the spiritual value which answers alike to the idea of God and to the immanent possibilities of man as

these have been revealed in Christ. Within the spiritual experience which thus unites the Apostle with the life, the work, and the world-embracing purpose of Christ is contained the revelation which the Apostle has received and proclaimed. It will be needful to consider later on the relations between spiritual experience, redemption, and revelation, as they are set forth in this Epistle. For the moment it is important to note that, in the great passage now under consideration, the revelation upon which St. Paul's apostolic calling depends is inseparably bound up with his own apprehension of the Mystery of Christ. Then this revelation comes to its own and gains spontaneous and full expression in the spirit and form of the apostolic ministry. The discharge of such a ministry involves the most intimate relations with mankind, with Christ, and with God. With mankind, for the very form of the Apostle's statement, 'to make all men see,' shows that he assumes, appeals to, and seeks to satisfy a divine capacity everywhere present. He counts upon the divine grace to awaken this capacity; to open the eyes which hitherto the god of this world has blinded. His ministry in Christ is sight-restoring and sight-satisfying. Its discharge demands a generous venture upon men that is justified by constant faith in the generosity of God who has made all men to be capable of Himself. Still more, the apostolic ministry demands inmost union with Christ, and therefore the joyful acceptance of vicarious passion. St. Paul's emphasis to the Philippians on 'fellowship with the sufferings of

Christ' (Phil. iii. 10), his rejoicing and congratulation 'if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith' (Phil. ii. 17), and his statement to the Colossians that he is filling up on his part 'that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ . . . for His Body's sake, which is the Church' (Col. i. 24), are all reflected in this Epistle. St. Paul is 'the prisoner of *Christ Jesus* in behalf of you Gentiles' (iii. 1). Nay more, he is 'the prisoner *in the Lord*' (iv. 1). His imprisonment is part of his spiritual embodiment in Christ and one form of its manifestation. Therefore he asks 'that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which are your glory' (iii. 13). He so enters into the pastoral office of his Lord that the sufferings of Christ are reproduced in him. They are so essential to his life and office as to be matter of rejoicing and not of regret.

Hence, finally, his sacred intimacy with the Father. 'For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father' (iii. 14), he says. The spiritual power and passion of his ministry pass into and are perfected by ceaseless prayer and intercession for the fulfilment of the divine purpose of redemption. And the intercession passes again into the enraptured doxology which celebrates the boundless power of God by which the seemingly impossible vastness of the petition is already assured of its fulfilment. Thus from the saving experience in which the apostolic ministry of St. Paul originates to the boundless expectation in which it ends, the whole is governed by an all-pervading union with God in Christ in His redemptive work.

In all this the Apostle's ministry becomes the type of all succeeding ministry in the Church of Christ. The spiritual conditions under which his ministry was exercised and the ends for which it was carried on contain the true ideals and standards of ministry to the end of time. However special may be the calling, it is contained within and arises out of the spiritual experience of Christ. Its aim is to interpret Christ to mankind and to win all to the fellowship of faith. Its full discharge brings men into peculiarly intimate relations with the passion of the Redeemer and with the heart of the Father, whose eternal purpose is revealed in Christ and wrought out by the ministry of the Spirit.

The very fact that St. Paul's commission is marked by such exceptional features only serves to make it the more distinctively typical. The vivid and far-reaching spiritual crisis through which he entered upon both his Christian life and his ministry only bring into higher relief and allow fuller play to the evangelical experience and the spiritual energies which must mould all ministry so far as it answers to the mind of Christ and becomes effective in accomplishing His will for men. In this respect the calling of St. Paul serves to qualify the impression that might otherwise be created by that of the other Apostles. The fact that they had accompanied our Lord in the flesh and had been trained for their work by discipleship to Him, taken by itself, might naturally lead to undue emphasis being placed upon external ordination and the historical succession of the ministry. Such considerations undoubtedly

have a place, but it is subordinate. The conversion and commission of St. Paul broke in upon this external order at the very beginning. This fact shows decisively that external regulation is not of the inmost essence of the matter. As the history of the Church has shown, it is comparatively easy to conceive of the ministry as a separated order of men appointed to formulate and guard the dogmas of the Church, to dispense its sacraments and to administer its discipline. Each of these interests of the Church has served here or there to colour the whole conception of the ministry. Orthodoxy, the sacraments, ecclesiastical rule, have all in their turn been seized upon as the predominant gifts which the Christian ministry safeguards and supplies. Then the governing ideal and the binding regulations of the ministry are fashioned in order to secure what is regarded as its predominant end. All these interests have their place, but, the Epistle to the Ephesians being witness, the place of each and all of these is subordinate. The evangelical ministry seeks to bring men into the fellowship of a great spiritual experience. Adoption as sons, redemption through Christ's blood, the forgiveness of trespasses, hope in Christ, a spirit of wisdom and revelation, the sense of quickening and heavenly exaltation, acceptance with God, access through Christ and in one Spirit unto the Father, the knowledge of the love of Christ, fellowship with the saints through a common access to God—these are the marks and aspects of this great experience as successively set out in this Epistle. The supreme

qualification for discharging such a ministry lies in becoming thoroughly possessed by the great evangelical experience to be proclaimed and imparted. For this reason the very fact that St. Paul received his calling, not from the earthly, but from the ascended and heavenly Christ, caused him to emphasize in this Epistle such outstanding spiritual features of ministry as are the best and indeed the only corrective of merely professional, hierarchic, magical, or external perversions of it.

So much for the Apostle's ministry in itself and as embodying the general type to which all true ministry must conform. But the Epistle contains an important description of the varied ministries of the Church : ' He gave some to be apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ' (iv. 11). It is clear that these distinctive titles describe a rich variety of ministerial gifts and functions which tend to be specialized in distinct offices of the Church. It does not follow, of course, that an apostle may not have the gifts which qualify him to be prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher. St. Paul himself is a pre-eminent example of the combination of all these gifts, and on occasion he fulfilled all these functions. Obviously, the life of the Spirit manifests itself in the conferment of a rich variety of gifts and in giving full effect thereby to various distinctive qualities on the part of those who receive them. The parallel passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians shows this process at work (1 Cor. xii. 1–11 and 28–30), giving a general list of ministries which contains all the

forms given in the passage now being considered save that of evangelist, and including others besides. The Apostle then says, 'All these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as He will' (1 Cor. xii. 11). Every one of these ministries answers to special wants of the Church, and there appeared to be some likelihood in the Apostle's time that all would become distinctive branches into which the Christian ministry was formally divided.

It is unnecessary and beyond the scope of this volume to deal fully with the varieties of ministerial office and function that are enumerated in this passage. Probably the first three—namely, apostles, prophets, and evangelists—are concerned chiefly with the missionary activities of the Church; the last—pastors and teachers—with its local interests and needs. There is some fluctuation and uncertainty in the use of the term 'apostle' in the New Testament. Pre-eminently it stands for the twelve with St. Paul, but other of their foremost assistants are sometimes designated by the name. Later on, in sub-Apostolic times, the word is preserved in the *Didache*, where it seems broadly to correspond with what we now understand by the term bishop. Such uncertainties and variations, however, do not touch the main point, which is clear—namely, that St. Paul uses the term of those men, more immediately commissioned by our Lord Himself, who stand in general ministerial relations to the Church as a whole and are charged with the twofold responsibility of directing its affairs and extending its range.

Closely allied with and yet subordinate to apostles come 'prophets' and 'evangelists.' The former term designates those who by a special gift of spiritual exaltation and empowerment are enabled to give convincing proclamation of the truth as it has been inwardly disclosed to them. The 'evangelists' represent the missionary agents of the gospel who fulfilled an itinerant ministry under the general direction of the Apostles. 'Pastors and teachers' are those men who, described in this twofold way, are charged with the oversight and instruction of particular Churches.

The most striking feature of the whole description is the way in which St. Paul emphasizes the missionary and spiritual, or charismatic, nature of the ministry rather than its official character. There is, for example, no reference whatever to bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Indeed, the word 'deacon' is used to describe St. Paul's own ministry and perhaps the unofficial services of members of the Church (iv. 12), instead of the Church officers specially designated by the name, although, of course, St. Paul knew of their existence and frequently salutes them in other Epistles. The description given here and that of 1 Cor. xii. show how much more powerful in apostolic times was the effect of spiritual influence than that of ecclesiastical selection and organization in constituting the ministry of the Church and defining its various functions. Differentiation and organization of ministerial offices were for the most part the secondary and not the primary stage. Hence it is not wonderful that times of spiritual

revival have tended to repeat the conditions of apostolic times by the rise, if not of apostles, at any rate of prophets and evangelists, whose activity has been due to a divine call rather than to human ordination. The more stereotyped and official the ministry has become, the less spiritual and evangelical.

It is in the realm of great spiritual aims and energies that the whole of the Apostle's description lies. The ends sought by the varied ministries of the Church are in the highest degree spiritual. Organization and administration are indeed necessary, and St. Paul knows on occasion how to emphasize their importance, as, for example, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Here, however, he is able to assume these practical functions and to rise above them to take account of the supreme ends to which organization, administration, and discipline are only subordinate means. The ministry exists 'for the perfecting of the saints . . . unto the building up of the body of Christ' (iv. 12). The very fact that such spiritual ends are sought subordinates the ministry, while raising its value. Hierarchical assumptions are in keeping with lower aims and with an undue emphasis on merely external order. The more spiritual and evangelical the aim the more truly indispensable becomes the ministry, but the more clearly ministerial—that is, marked out for service, and not for mastery.

Moreover, there is a total and most impressive absence of any reference whatever to priestly functions. Indeed, the description of the ministry—

alike the spiritual conditions of its exercise, the ends it seeks, and the forms it takes—all exclude any priestly conception of it. St. Paul, as we have seen, alludes more than once to initiation and illumination. It is the privilege of this ministry and of other ministries fashioned after its likeness that they convey, by the Spirit, such initiation and illumination. Their designed effect, therefore, is to free every one who receives the spiritual gift from such subserviency as goes with the recognition of a priestly caste or order. The Apostle is clearly concerned to be the means of raising all men to an equal fellowship with himself and to an equally direct access unto the Father. Those who attain through his ministry to the adoption of sons, to seeing with full spiritual apprehension 'what is the dispensation of the mystery that hath been hid in God who created all things,' may be continuously indebted to the ministry, but they cannot be dependent upon it. Hence it is clear that the conception of the ministry as here presented stands for spiritual freedom and not servitude, for the independent and direct, and not the mediated access of all the members of the Church to the Source of light and life and love.

All this would be still further strengthened by the acceptance of the rendering of verse 12 given by many commentators, which reads, 'For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministry' (iv. 12). The removal of the comma after the word 'saints' would suggest that their perfecting consists in their being fitted to render their own appointed ministry or service in the Church. It is objected that the

word ' ministry ' stands throughout the apostolic writings for official service. On the other hand, the very fact that the Apostle calls himself a minister, or deacon, shows how elastic is his use of the term. Moreover, he contemplates that all the members of the Church will attain ' to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.' If this be the case, such spiritual attainment not only qualifies for ministry in the larger sense of the term, but cannot be enjoyed without it. Hence the reasons for omitting the comma are strong, though not decisive. Furthermore, they accord with the emphasis laid in this Epistle and in 1 Corinthians upon the spiritual qualifications of the ministry and the free activities of the Spirit of Christ in conferring them. Hence the Apostle's doctrine of the ministry from first to last is in accord with the sublime elevation of his doctrine of the Church. Every approach to the realization of the ideal Church will so uplift and transform the ministry that it becomes, not an institution of human regulation, but of divine calling and inspiration. It will develop its inmost meaning and gain its supreme ends by a rich and varied freedom that transcends merely human organization in fulfilling the divine order of holy life and love.

It may no doubt be urged that the opening statement, ' *He gave* some apostles,' &c., gives the warrant for a distinctive doctrine, not only as to the source and nature of the Christian ministry, but as to the mode of its appointment, the means of its continuation, its independence of and authority over the Church. It is held in certain quarters that this

text contains a proof that the ministry is in such wise the gift of Christ that it is creative of the Church, that by being directly derived from Christ it is accountable only to Christ Himself, and that it has conferred upon it the power of securing its own continuity by what is called Apostolic Succession.

Such an interpretation brings down the Apostle's statement to a different and altogether lower plane than that in which his thought was moving as he wrote the passage.

Whether the different orders or types of ministry be directly appointed by the Apostles, as holding authority from Christ, or by the Church itself, as a self-governing commonwealth, makes no difference whatever to the Apostle's statement that the ministry is the direct gift of Christ. For even if the authority be that of the Church as a whole, and be delegated by the Church to the ministry, this in no wise makes the sovereign grace and activity of Christ more remote. For the Church, as a self-governing Commonwealth, is constituted only in Christ. It has neither powers, nor even existence, apart from Him. He acts over, in, and through its collective life as authoritatively and directly, in the Spirit, as He could do through the Apostles and their successors. There is no greater obstacle to the exercise of His power and no greater risk of defection in the one case than in the other.

In either alternative the ministry is the direct gift of Christ. For the persons qualified to exercise it are fitted to do so by three endowments, which are all bestowed by Christ Himself. In the first place,

there is the share in the quickened and heavenly life of the Spirit, without which no man can receive either authority or power to minister in a quickened and heavenly community. Then there are the special charismatic gifts, which, resting on and being superadded to the common experience of grace, fit men to become the organs through which its special blessings are conveyed. And, lastly, the original and so-called natural endowments, without which the special charismatic gifts could not be bestowed—the aptitudes which are selected, developed, and empowered for the purpose of ministry—all these are the gift of Christ. Hence, whatever may be the method, and whoever may be the media, of ministerial selection and ordination, the ministry—qualified, ordained, and authorized—is the direct gift of Christ Himself to His Church.

Moreover, whatever may have been the subsequent history of the Church on the whole, or of any particular Church, the initial acts, which lead to its constitution, must needs, for the most part, be those of apostolic or of quasi-apostolic authority. The procedure, for example, of founding a local Congregational Church in India is not likely to differ fundamentally from that which is followed by an Episcopalian missionary. The exercise of personal authority in founding and aiding an immature community must in any case be the only means of preparing the way for eventual self-government. The apostolic planting of the primitive Church offers a universal and conspicuous example of what must needs be repeated again and again, throughout

history and in all parts of the world, in the rearing of Churches, no matter what may be the ecclesiastical ideals of their founders.

Yet one consideration above all others must be borne steadily in mind. The passage now under consideration sets forth the dominant end for which Christ gives the ministry, as being the development and perfecting of the collective personality of the Church—as including the parallel and corresponding development of personality in the individual members. This end is said to be—'till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (iv. 13). This development involves, not merely the deliverance of individuals from the weakness and errors of spiritual childhood, but their vital empowerment to render each his own responsible service 'according to the working in due measure of each several part' (iv. 16). From this governing end it is not impossible to draw certain inferences as to the means and methods that must be chosen if full effect is to be given to this all-controlling purpose. There can be no more deadly enemy of personality—both collective and individual—in the Church than an absolutist ministry. The ministry exists for the Church, not the Church for the ministry. Therefore only that theory and practice of the ministry can be tolerated which tends most surely to promote the spiritual efficiency and maturity of the Church as the body created for and sustained by the vital, all-perva-

sive, and direct activity of the Head. He ever seeks, and He alone is able, to bring every individual member into the living fellowship of the whole. The ministry can be His gift in no other sense than that it exists in such direct relations, not only to Christ but to His Church, that it develops, instead of checking, the advance of the latter towards the full realization of immediate fellowship with Christ and of direct responsibility, both corporate and individual, to Him.

CHAPTER X

THE REVELATION AND APPREHENSION OF THE TRUTH

The foregoing chapters have shown clearly how greatly Christ and the apprehension of Christ transcend the merely intellectual sphere. God in Christ is revealed in a great redemptive act by which His eternal purpose of love is fulfilled. The result of that act is a spiritual quickening by which men are brought into the life of sonship and into the enjoyment of its boundless inheritance. Yet while the intellect is transcended in Christ, both its rights and its powers are fully recognized. Nowhere is this more fully the case than in the Epistle to the Ephesians. And this equally on account of the nature of the gospel, of the individuality of St. Paul, and of the spiritual outlook of those to whom he was writing. As to this last, all the terms that cluster round the central conception of 'Mystery' convey suggestions that are in part, though only subordinately, intellectual. And so far as the Apostle is concerned, while the inmost spiritual need cries out for a life-giving revelation, and while the consciousness of sin looks above all for atonement and redemption, the reason can only be

satisfied by such an illumination as furnishes guiding principles for the whole conduct both of thought and life. Hence the gospel is called 'the word of *the truth*' (i. 13). Subsequently we hear of *truth* 'as truth is in Jesus' (iv. 21). In correspondence with 'the truth' stands truth of disposition and conduct 'in love' (iv. 15). The new man which Christians have put on 'hath been created in righteousness and holiness *of truth*' (iv. 24).

Moreover, behind these specific references to the truth, the Epistle contains much other teaching that emphasizes the place of reason in religion. The dispensation of the Mystery of Christ is 'to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church *the manifold wisdom* of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord' (iii. 10, 11). The riches of His grace God 'made to abound towards us *in all wisdom and prudence*' (i. 8). In this passage, even if the wisdom and prudence are God's gifts bestowed upon men rather than His own qualities made manifest in His dealing with them, yet the very fact that such wisdom and prudence are needed in order that we may apprehend the meaning of Christ shows that the gospel makes a supreme appeal to reason and calls for its co-operation in the full accomplishment of salvation. Thus also the Apostle prays that his hearers may be endowed 'with a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him' (i. 17), and also that the 'eyes of their heart may be *illuminated*'

(i. 18). The Apostle magnifies his own '*understanding* in the mystery of Christ' (iii. 4), and in the pursuit of his apostolic calling seeks 'to make all men *see*,' to illuminate them as to the nature of 'the dispensation of the Mystery' (iii. 9). In his great prayer on behalf of his readers, stress is laid on the power of spiritual apprehension and on the knowledge of 'the love of Christ which passeth knowledge' (iii. 18, 19). It is true that, whether regarded as revelation or as redemption, the truth has much more than intellectual significance. Yet its distinctive quality would be destroyed if its intellectual features were blotted out.

From all this it is manifest that both an objective and a subjective element are concerned. 'The truth' is something objective. It waits to be apprehended by us. It exists apart from the apprehension of this or that particular man. It is there for all to see if only they have eyes to behold it. In this objective sense truth is usually understood to signify reality. And not the reality of this or that object in abstraction from the rest of the universe. Truth stands for the reality of the universe as an articulated and coherent whole. And the secret of this wholeness is to be found in the meaning it makes manifest and the end it serves. An irrational world would not be in the true sense of the term a universe, for rationality consists, not merely in physical order, but in such order as satisfies the intellectual and spiritual demands of those who come to apprehend it. *The* truth, by pre-eminence therefore, consists in the

sovereign fact of reality, which fulfils the purpose and supplies the meaning of the whole, ordering and, so far as needs be, transforming it.

On the subjective side truth is inner correspondence with this objective reality. The truth of reality is apprehended by truth of disposition, and thus becomes the mould in which character is shaped, the principle by which action is governed, the illumination by which reason and understanding do their work. As is the truth of reality, so must be the truth of apprehension. The nature and riches of reality will of necessity govern the nature and fullness of the response. For this reason, as we shall come to see, the Apostle speaks of 'righteousness and holiness of truth' (iv. 24), because the reality that is apprehended is both morally and spiritually perfect. It is 'after God,' expressed 'in Jesus,' and conveyed in the quickening of the Spirit of Christ. Hence the first condition of spiritual progress is that the divine reality should be apprehended, experienced, and expressed by a corresponding faculty of truth.

The truth understood as the sovereign factor, and therefore the fullness of divine reality, is made known by revelation. This word, with all that it signifies, governs the whole treatment of the subject throughout the Epistle. The Apostle reminds his readers 'how that *by revelation* was made known unto me the mystery' (iii. 3). In time past this was 'not made known unto the sons of men, as *it hath now been revealed* unto His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit'

(iii. 5). St. Paul, as we have already seen, prays ' that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you *a spirit of wisdom and revelation* in the knowledge of Him ' (i. 17). The truth thus imparted to apostles and prophets is received by a kindred illumination of the hearts of believers. Hence the Apostle speaks of ' having the eyes of your heart enlightened ' (i. 18). So also he describes his commission as being ' *to make all men see* what is the dispensation of the mystery ' (iii. 9). This seeing is due, not merely or chiefly to any exercise of attention or perception on their part, but to a spiritual illumination which is so imparted to their spiritual faculties as to satisfy them in the very process of empowering them. All this goes to emphasize the fact that the knowledge of the truth comes to man by way of a divine unveiling or impartation of it. It is first of all the gift of God, not the attainment of men. This gift comes by way of spiritual intuition, so that it is a direct and inspiring vision, not a reasoned and formal conclusion. At the same time the revelation is so intimately personal that it cannot be conveyed except in a quickened and uplifting apprehension which enables the recipient to find the truth in the same moment that he is found by the truth, and as part of the same gracious operation. Divine grace and human attainment coalesce. Indeed, the divine gift of revelation according to the Epistle would be reduced to nullity apart from this consequent and corresponding apprehension of it. It is not a question of an abstract, still less of

a purely intellectual revelation to an external and competent human faculty. The gift is creative of the faculty that receives it. And while revelation is vouchsafed in a special sense to apostles and prophets, there is no chasm between the gift bestowed upon them and that which is imparted to those who believe through their word. The difference is one of degree rather than of kind between those who are the first and foremost in attaining to this knowledge and those who through them come to share and verify it. The spread of the truth to the larger body can only become effectual through the same divine operation as first conveyed it to apostles and prophets. Thus all knowledge of the truth in the sense of the Apostle comes by revelation. Revelation is both transcendent and immanent ; the veil is taken away not merely from the truth, but by the same grace from the heart of him who apprehends it. Apostles and prophets are in a special sense the *media* of revelation ; yet only because there has been given to them the power to apprehend with peculiar clearness and fullness that which through them must also be apprehended by those who receive their word. Hence the end of revelation is not merely the completion of a body of revealed truth, but the raising up of a succession of illuminated men in whose experience the truth lives and by whom it is held fast and safeguarded.

Revelation is, therefore, something far higher than the conveyance of authoritative doctrines for the external regulation of belief. If it comes to

yield such doctrines and to exercise such regulating power, these are its last consequences, not its first beginnings or its essential meaning. The divine revelation is contained in and conveyed by divine action. This action is at once historic and spiritual. It consists in deeds summed up in and springing forth from a supreme deed, which brings illumination in its train as part of itself. This deed of God lies at the heart of and consummates His ceaseless and ordered activity throughout the history of mankind. The revelation of the truth is conveyed in the fulfilment of the eternal purpose of God. This eternal purpose is the bestowment of sonship through Jesus Christ unto the Father (i. 5). This bestowment of sonship can only come through the redemption that makes atonement for sin, first of all, and then destroys sin by a spiritual quickening. Hence the whole of revelation is contained and lives in Christ. Therefore it is that in a great passage to which close attention must be given shortly the Apostle uses the words: 'But ye did not so learn Christ; if so be that ye heard Him, and were taught in Him, *even as truth is in Jesus*' (iv. 20, 21). The whole of the truth is embodied in and conveyed by Christ as the Divine Redeemer, who stands in divine and saving relations to mankind. The truth which is summed up in Christ was made known in and through His historic personality; truth is *in Jesus*. He stands not merely for the personal subject of certain historic facts and certain dogmas of the faith, but for a continuous source of revelation and influence: 'If so be that

ye heard Him and were taught in Him.' He is the substance of the truth, the continuous teacher of the truth, the spiritual sphere in which the truth can be learned, the historic personality in whom it is embodied and expressed.

The striking expression, 'Ye did not so learn Christ,' emphasizes what we have seen to be the essential relation between revelation and illumination. The term 'revelation' describes the act of God in presenting the truth to the spiritual apprehension of man. Illumination represents the divine empowerment of man's apprehension, without which no revelation can take place. The two sides may be distinguished in thought, but are inseparable in fact. The truth can only be known by a divine act, which is at one and the same time an act of revelation and of illumination. The presentation of the truth and the empowerment of the faculty to apprehend it are the two sides of one gracious operation. This fact is brought home in the passage now under consideration. Believers are said to '*learn Christ*,' not about Him. Indeed, Christ is for the Apostle so essentially Redeemer and Spirit that the only knowledge of Him which the Apostle recognizes is that of a pervasive and quickening experience which founds the whole life in Christ and conforms it to Christ.

All this must be more closely investigated. It is necessary to ask more specifically the following questions: (1) What is the truth? (2) What is the sphere and method of its revelation? (3) What is involved in its apprehension? And (4) What is the nature of its verification as being indeed the truth?

1. What is 'the truth,' taking the term in the largest sense of the Epistle? It is evident that it consists primarily in the purpose and calling of divine grace and power as made known and experienced in Christ. In the opening words of the Epistle, St. Paul is occupied with the unfolding of this purpose in the redemptive life-history of Christ and in the spiritual experience which grows out of it. All the terms that have been previously considered—for example, 'the eternal purpose,' 'the dispensation of the mystery,' and the like—show that the substance of the truth consists in the fulfilment of the divine end for mankind in Christ. All the particular truths which can be gathered about God, man, and the universe are made manifest in the fulfilment of this purpose and can be deduced from it. All such particular truths are held together and compose a living whole in the eternal purpose of God. The abstract intellectual rendering of 'the truth' would consist in drawing out for the mind all the distinct elements, aspects, presuppositions, and consequences of the eternal purpose thus fulfilled.

This, however, is not all. The eternal purpose is made manifest, not in a message, but in a Person. The purpose cannot even be conceived apart from its embodiment in Christ, who realizes it for mankind. According to the Epistle, we do not gain knowledge of God's purpose and then go to work to find out how Christ gave effect to it. We are presented with the living fact of Christ—His personality, His completed life-history, and His spiritual efficacy. In these, taken together, the eternal purpose of God is

revealed by being made actually effectual. The eternal purpose of God thus revealed by being made effectual in Christ discloses the grace of His holy Fatherhood. Just as the divine purpose cannot be separated from the person and work of the Son in whom it is fulfilled, so the character of the Father is only made known in and through His purpose of holy love. In that purpose, therefore, all the truth concerning God—His character, His relationships to mankind, His sovereignty over the universe—is contained. And more. It is His Fatherhood which is made manifest in His eternal purpose of love. Hence the truth as to God contains the truth as to man. To the Fatherhood of God corresponds the sonship of men. The fatherly purpose of love can have no other end than the adoption of sons, and in order to this, the conferment of the filial capacity which it is the whole object of fatherly grace and mercy to restore, to perfect, and to satisfy. As is the Fatherhood, so is the sonship, eternal, holy, spiritual. Such sonship, corresponding to the holy Fatherhood that confers it, is the ideal which is in process of being realized in conscious experience as the gift and calling of God in Christ Jesus. It therefore fixes the standard of truth, the divine ideal of life, for those who have received it and for mankind as being gifted with a divine capacity to receive it. Still more broadly, the truth thus understood reveals the nature and destiny of the universe itself as being in solidarity with and subservient to the eternal purpose of the Father. So far from the supernatural life-history of Christ overriding nature

or being in contrast to it, the inmost nature and the spiritual affinities of the universe are only made manifest in the central fact of the crucified, risen, and ascended Christ. Hence the Epistle gives the highest expression to the specifically Christian view which draws nature into the processes of grace, instead of expelling it from them. All this is included in the term 'truth' as it is set forth in the Epistle. The truth is embodied in the historic Jesus, not only as being in actual fact presented in an authentic life, but also because as a unique Personality He realized the whole meaning and accomplished the whole purpose of the Fatherhood of God. Thus *Jesus* is not only presented as a distinct and unique individuality, but as *the Christ*, having universally redemptive and spiritual relations towards mankind and the universe. The truth which manifests *its reality* in the historic Person reveals *its meaning* in the Christhood by which He sets forth and fulfils the eternal purpose of God for mankind and the universe.

2. The next question to be answered is: What is the sphere in which and the method by which the truth is revealed? Its substance is Christ, and those who 'learn Christ' 'hear Him and are taught *in* Him.' He is, therefore, according to the Apostle, the sphere as well as the substance of revelation. It is necessary to examine carefully what is meant. The first question that suggests itself is whether, according to St. Paul, there is any revelation apart from Christ. As to this, the answer is clear, though it is by no means simple. St. Paul inherited and

took over into Christianity his Jewish faith. That faith finds three *media* of revelation : the disclosures made by the Spirit to the prophets, the providential history of Israel and (as was ultimately seen) of mankind, and the testimony of the universe itself. These three are eventually fused in the prophetic consciousness. Or perhaps the most correct statement would be that the revelation conveyed in the personal spiritual experience of the prophets finds its material in the history of Israel as the history of redemption, and in the universe as divinely created, ordered, and sustained. The personal experience stands first. But this personal experience is only possible as set in the context of the collective experience of the chosen people. In God's ways with them He is revealed as the Creator and Sovereign of the universe which serves His will. All this St. Paul has received and never set aside. For example, in the course of his great indictment against the heathen world in the Epistle to the Romans he declares, ' For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity ' (Rom. i. 20). Later on, in the same argument, he continues, ' What advantage then hath the Jew ? or what is the profit of circumcision ? Much every way : first of all, that they were intrusted with the oracles of God ' (Rom. iii. 1, 2). Other evidence to the same effect might easily be given. Yet it needs but a glance at the Epistle to the Ephesians to see that in the Apostle's view Christ embodies, fulfils, and

transcends all previous revelation. On the three lines that have been suggested, the Spirit of Christ is the last and highest source of inspiration, the work of Christ is the supreme deed of redemptive history, and the fact of Christ is the highest reality of the universe, which is incomplete without Him and can only be construed in the light of this its consummating fact. All these three elements are included in the sphere of Christ. This means that all previous revelation is assumed and restated in a higher way in Christ. The nature of God, of man, and of the universe, both severally and in their mutual relations, are made known in the fulfilment of the divine purpose. The divine purpose stands revealed in the supreme fact which accomplishes it. For St. Paul, therefore, there are not two separate spheres of revelation, one of the Old Testament and the other of the New. He does not need to go outside Christ for any part of his belief about God or the universe. He is under no necessity either to justify the previous revelation by reference to the later, or the later by reference to the earlier. The revelation of Christ shines in its own light. It recapitulates, while surpassing, all previous revelation. To 'learn Christ,' therefore, is to learn all things in Him. He embraces and transforms the universe in fulfilling and expressing its highest and inmost meaning.

One additional consideration must be borne in mind in order to complete the answer. St. Paul, as is evident from the Epistle to the Colossians, saw Christ as not merely the end, but also as the agent and controlling idea of creation. 'He is before all

things, and in Him all things consist' (Col. i. 17). Hence for the Apostle all previous revelation and redemption are as truly the operation of Christ as is the redemptive work for which He became incarnate.

Another question must be asked: How does revelation stand related in the Apostle's mind to redemption, and to the spiritual fulfilment which is brought about by redemption? Is the divine process of revelation distinct from that of redemption? Are they parallel operations, or is one contained within and subordinate to the other? The latter would appear to be the true answer. The substance of revelation is contained in redemption. Every element of the truth is present as an organic part of this great whole. The illumination which enables men to apprehend the truth does not stand apart from the grace which brings salvation, but finds its place therein. The reason, or wisdom, may find in redemption the constitutive ideals for which it seeks; and the conscience, the authority and the guidance it needs. These requirements are met in Christ, and faith hands the means of satisfying them over to the reason and the conscience for their respective uses. Thus the entire substance of the revelation is contained in and conveyed by redemption. Hence also the illumination that apprehends the truth is part of the inward gift of redemption. The illumination conveyed through redemption enables the reflective work of faith in its unifying and discriminating activities to be duly discharged.

3. This is not all. Redemption in carrying out

the eternal purpose of God in man reveals the divine ideal for man and establishes it as the living principle of human conduct. 'The truth,' therefore, is the truth *for us*. Hence, early in the Epistle, St. Paul speaks of 'the word of *the truth*' as being 'the gospel of your salvation' (i. 13). The truth contains and conveys the spiritual ideal in which man's destination is fulfilled and his divinely implanted capacity realized. The governing relationship of the whole is, as we have seen, the Fatherhood which seeks to confer corresponding sonship upon man as the peculiar gift of redemption. The original conception of human nature can only be explained in the light of this predestined end. The work of redemption is to rescue this destination from failure through the perversion of sin, and the process of salvation is the complete realization of all that is involved in it. But this destination and gift of sonship implies spiritual and moral correspondence with the Father. The Fatherly-filial relationship has a spiritual and not a merely natural content. This correspondence with the Father in His holy perfection means conformity with Christ. It means, as we have seen, that Christians have 'learned Christ.' They have 'put on the new man' (iv. 24), by which St. Paul clearly means Christ. For he declares in the Epistle to the Galatians that 'as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ' (Gal. iii. 27); and in the Epistle to the Colossians, in speaking of 'the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him' (Col. iii. 10), he adds that 'Christ

is all, and in all' (Col. iii. 11). From this follows of necessity the dominance of the Spirit of Christ over the personality of every one who receives 'the adoption of sons.' Thus the truth for us is to be found in the righteousness and holiness in which the divine character is reproduced. The new man 'after God hath been created *in righteousness and holiness of truth*' (iv. 24). From whatever point of view we regard the subject—whether from the Divine Fatherhood with its eternal purpose, from the headship of Christ, or from that of His work of redemption—the truth as it concerns mankind consists in the righteousness and holiness which are the very life of all who become sons of God.

It is clear, therefore, that it is only possible to apprehend 'the truth' as thus defined as we come to realize it. It is as men become righteous and holy that they are enabled growingly to apprehend the truth in regard equally to righteousness and holiness and also to themselves. For this reason, in the passage now under consideration, to 'learn Christ' is said to mean 'that ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth' (iv. 22–24).

From all this it is manifest that the quickening of which the Apostle has already spoken is not carried out apart from the personal activity and response of those who receive it. The power which is

received enables them to put away the old man 'which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit.' The deceitfulness of such lusts is to be found not only in the fact that they cause those who are subject to them to live in an atmosphere of deceitfulness, but that their destructive effect is wrought by means of delusions that pervert the true standards of life. Moral corruption involves the falsifying and eventually the loss of these standards. The deceitfulness of the lusts leads to self-deception, and thereby to entire falsehood of being. On the other hand, righteousness and holiness go with truthfulness, and truthfulness works to the inner establishment of the truth as the divinely prescribed ideal and immanent law of character and life. The quickening and renewing of redemption enables and constrains those who receive it, by their own act or decisive reversal, to put off the old man and to put on the new. By means of this decisive act, new and permanent direction is given to personality and conduct. It is as this process is wrought out in all its bearings and consequences that men are enabled to apprehend, express, and verify the truth.

In regard not only to the true but also to the false, the Apostle lays stress, not upon intellectual, but upon spiritual and moral conditions. A contrast is drawn out between the condition of the Gentiles, in which the Apostle's readers had previously shared, and that into which the latter have been brought by 'putting on the new man.' In the description of the former as in that of the latter

condition, spiritual and moral features are linked throughout with those which, taken by themselves, might be regarded as intellectual. Thus the Gentiles are described as walking ' in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart ' (iv. 17, 18). This complex description reveals a perversion of personality to its inmost centre. The darkening of the understanding and the besetting ignorance are bound up with alienation from the life of God and hardening of the heart. Even the vanity of the mind represents a spiritual defect, a fatuity which means sinful negligence of the true ends of life. Hence the restoration to truth, reality, and sanity can only come by way of a fundamental restoration of the personality by putting on ' the new man.' The whole of this important passage should be studied in close connexion with Rom. i. 16–32, in which St. Paul gives his classic account of the causes and development of spiritual and moral decay in the Gentile world. In particular he there speaks of the ' ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness ' (Rom. i. 18). This is an outstanding statement of St. Paul's constant teaching, that truth consists in spiritual and moral adjustment to divine relationships, and that the problem of humanity is concerned, not with intellectual errors or ignorance, but with spiritual defection from God. Truth stands for the complete correspondence of renewed personality in all its powers

and aspirations with the truth embodied in Christ, who is its ground, its substance, and its pervading spirit.

It is within the sphere of truth as thus realized that wisdom works. Through wisdom, truth becomes the object of reflection, appreciation, and deliberate pursuit. Its meaning, beauty, and constraining authority unfold themselves to the growing power of spiritual appreciation. In this light, steadfast selection is made of the true principles and ends of action for all the relationships of life. Power is also given to fulfil these highest ends according to 'the righteousness and holiness of truth.'

4. Finally, the term 'truth' necessarily suggests, not merely a contrast with subjective falsehood or error, but also conformity to objective reality. In apprehending and conforming to truth a judgement is implied, namely, that what is apprehended is true. In the sphere of spiritual experience this involves, to begin with, the subjective fulfilment of the ideal. But the ideal of subjective experience cannot be separated from its ground in and its justification by the nature of things as a whole. How, then, does the truth commend itself to the spiritual consciousness as being true—that is to say, as fulfilling the ideal in conformity with the whole nature and order of the universe? Apparently St. Paul's answer would be threefold. The truth comes as a new life consciously received from without and from above. It is a self-authenticating gift; not a human discovery, still less a human invention.

In the next place, this gift establishes specifically new relations with God and with mankind; towards God those of sonship, towards man those of brotherhood. Yet these new relations do but bring to the birth and eventually to full maturity all the promise contained in human nature itself. All that human nature stands for, as ideally conceived, assumes the truth of these relations, and can only be fulfilled in realizing them. All sinfulness and evil lie just in the contradiction or the destruction of these relationships, or at least in the failure to enter into them. The inner conflict of spiritual life is due to the pressure of these relationships upon a personality which is either unable or unwilling to realize them. Hence the divine gift of the new life is at once realized as an emancipation and fulfilment.

Thus the final verification of truth lies in the spiritual health and satisfaction of heart and mind. St. Paul's last word in regard to the verification of truth is contained in his great intercession, 'Having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe' (i. 18, 19). The living experience of the redemptive power of God, fulfilling His own purpose in men to their complete and endless satisfaction, carries with it the irresistible evidence of its truth.

CHAPTER XI

THE MORAL CREATIVENESS OF CHRIST AND THE HALLOWING OF LIFE

The Epistle to the Ephesians is as remarkable for its emphasis on the moral interests of the Christian life as it is for the sublimity of its evangelical and spiritual content. This moral emphasis is all-important for the complete description of life in Christ. It was essential also in the practical interests of readers who had been won from heathenism to Christianity, and who lived in centres where a nature religion, surcharged with elemental emotions, had served as a hotbed of degenerate practices. The fact that this is a circular letter makes the teaching and exhortations of the Apostle sufficiently specific without any such need of dealing with questions of internal discipline as arose, for example, in the case of the Corinthian Church. Hence the pervasive moral concern of the Apostle in no wise mars the due proportion in which all the elements and interests of the Christian life are set forth. The moral element is present throughout the whole of the Epistle, and is completely interwoven with the rest of its texture.

The moral note is struck at the outset. God

chose believers in Christ before the foundation of the world 'that they should be holy and without blemish before Him in love' (i. 4). Here the great religious terms 'holy' and 'without blemish'—familiar in a lower sense even to the heathen—are uplifted and transformed by the spiritual and moral import of love as the Apostle understands it. Religion moves no longer amid external and ceremonial regulations. Alike its inspiring motive, its intrinsic nature, and its practical expression are found in love. The immense importance of this will appear later on in the exposition. It may suffice for the moment to note that spiritual religion is an unfailing source of moral inspiration, and that the sum-total of moral duties is unified and based upon spiritual, that is religious, relationships.

The groundwork of St. Paul's moral teaching is laid in the first three chapters of the Epistle, in which he describes the Church as the Body of Christ and sets forth the heavenly citizenship in Him of 'those who are called to be saints.' In the first part of the fourth chapter St. Paul describes the body of Christ as a living organism 'fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part,' so that it makes 'the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love' (iv. 16). Hence three factors determine St. Paul's moral teaching. To begin with, he deals with moral obligations primarily as subsisting between members of the Church as being of the body of Christ, and, therefore, not merely bound up with

the wider community of the outside world, but, above all, in vital union with Christ. In the next place, all moral duties have an all-important individual bearing for each member of the Church, because of the infinite responsibilities and potentialities which arise out of his direct and filial relationship with God in Christ. And, thirdly, the entire round of moral duties is social in its character, since the individual, sanctified and quickened in Christ, finds the sphere and fulfilment of his personal life in the fellowship of the whole body of the Church. Thus all Christian obligation has mystical, individual, and social bearings. Each of these three factors claims some special consideration.

(1) The Church as the body of Christ is in the foreground of the Apostle's mind throughout. He is occupied with the mutual relations of members of the heavenly commonwealth, bound together in Christ by the ties of a common life which is rooted and grounded in love. All Christian obligation is, first of all, Christward, and in Him, to the members of His body. At the same time, this emphasis upon the body of Christ as the sphere in which moral temper and conduct find their highest standards and gain completest expression does not mean for a moment that the life of the Church is so self-contained as to cut its members off from the ordinary fellowship of mankind or to tolerate double standards of conduct, within the Church and outside it. The vices that are to be avoided and the virtues that are to be sought after display their

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meaning most fully in the heightened and spiritual intimacy of the Church. Membership of the Church with its holy standards of life is the most powerful means of excluding the vices that are condemned. They are not only banned by its discipline, but they perish in its atmosphere. On the other hand, membership of the Church affords the amplest sphere and the fullest training for the virtues of the spiritual life. These need for their full development, not merely the divine relationship and the spiritual dynamic, which can only be completely realized in the Church ; they need also the transcendent and sanctified relations of fellowship, which can only be enjoyed in the City of God. The Church is a co-operative society for the cultivation and complete expression of these virtues upon the perfection of which its health depends. Yet, although this is the case, the heavenly is not so walled off from the earthly city that the highest life of the Church can be pursued without reference to wider human relationships. The obligation to abandon stealing and to take to honest labour (iv. 28) is obviously one that can only be completely fulfilled in the general relationships of life. For St. Paul never sought to isolate the Church as a self-contained colony. It may have been, and doubtless often was, the case that a Christian master had Christian slaves or employed Christian artisans. But no attempt was made to turn a spiritual into an economic community. To have done so would have been to injure the spirituality of the Church and to destroy its broadly human

contact with mankind. Hence the duties which are a primary obligation within the Church apply in full to the corresponding relationships outside, and the virtues which are fostered in the fellowship of believers cannot be contradicted or become inoperative in the ordinary intercourse of life.

(2) The personal aspects of Christian morality are strongly marked throughout the Epistle. This is apparent at every point of the Apostle's treatment. His readers are called to an intense and sustained endeavour to realize the new standards of life in all its relationships and concerns. The Apostle deals not only with outward actions, but at least equally with the inward tempers from which they spring. Moreover, when he exhorts 'that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth' (iv. 23, 24), it is manifest that he is setting an ideal before the individual members of the Church by the pursuit of which alone can the new man be effectually realized in each. There is abundant need, therefore, for self-respect, self-reverence, and self-control if this ideal is to be realized in all its features. Yet the personal regard of Christian morality is not self-centred. There is a divine element superadded at every point, because of the supreme relationships to the Triune God, out of which the relationships of Church life spring and on which they rest. The Apostle opens the more practical section of the Epistle by saying, 'I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of *the*

calling wherewith ye were called ' (iv. 1), where the reference clearly is to the gracious purpose of the Father who has called believers to receive ' the adoption of sons unto Himself.' After warning his readers that they should ' no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk ' (iv. 17), St. Paul proceeds, ' But ye did not so *learn Christ* ' (iv. 20). Later on he exhorts them, ' Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God ' (iv. 30). Thus at every point self-reverence is exalted and transfigured, so that it becomes reverence for the divine relations in which the personal life of the believer has been reconstituted and is now grounded. Earlier in the Epistle it is stated that believers are God's ' workmanship, created *in Christ Jesus*, for good works which God afore prepared that we should walk in them ' (ii. 10). The full meaning of all this is brought home by St. Paul's two great confessions of his own personal experience made elsewhere. To the Galatians he says : ' It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me ' (Gal. ii. 20). To the Philippians : ' For to me to live is Christ ' (Phil. i. 21). Thus all that is potent in self-respect, self-reverence, and self-control is preserved. And yet all self-consciousness is transcended, because the personality of the believer is lost and thereby found again in richer measure through entrance into Christ.

(3) The social bearings, however, of Christian morality are most obvious throughout the Epistle. There is no self-contained enthusiasm anywhere. The manifold powers of the renewed personality can only be drawn forth in social relationships.

Hence at the outset the declaration that the new man 'hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth' (iv. 24). Both these terms describe the character of believers in their relations to the divine-human society of the Church, in which relations to God and relations to man can never be separated. It might be thought, perhaps, that righteousness is chiefly a quality of conduct towards men, while holiness has reference, above all, to God. This, however, would not correspond with the characteristic teaching of St. Paul, or indeed with the deeper elements of the Christian religion. The Apostle is always primarily concerned with righteousness before God, the full consequence and content of which includes righteous dealing with men. And similarly the term 'holiness' has become fully charged with a moral meaning. The divine consecration of saintship adds peculiar grace to the whole round of moral duties. It is the preservative of the inmost heart from contamination. Yet, while this peculiar grace is conferred by the divine relationship, the embodiment of holiness is found, according to St. Paul and the New Testament generally, in the conduct of life. Conformity to the divine standard is represented by righteousness; reverent and sensitive loyalty to the Divine Spirit by holiness. Each in its distinctive way blends the divine and the human. Righteousness sounds more distinctly the moral, and holiness the spiritual, note of a harmony which must needs include both.

From this starting-point, however, St. Paul

chiefly emphasizes the social nature of Christian morality, as moulded by the relations that should subsist between members of the same community, and especially of a community which springs out of a recreated spiritual and moral life. He deals in order with all the principal social obligations. His readers are to put away *falsehood* and ' to speak *truth* each one with his neighbour ' (iv. 25). They are to be ' angry and sin not ' (iv. 26). They are to substitute honest labour, in order to generous giving, for stealing (iv. 28). They are to ' let no corrupt speech proceed out of ' their ' mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear ' (iv. 29). All ' bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing ' are to be put away from them ' with all malice,' and they are to be ' kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other ' (iv. 31, 32). The highest purity is to mark the intimacy of their fellowship, showing the true meaning and dignity of Christian love (v. 1–14). Their conduct is to be marked throughout by circumspectness, wisdom, and a serious sense of stewardship which buys up the opportunity (v. 15, 16). Their inward exaltation must be due not to excess of wine, but to their being ' filled with the Spirit ' (v. 18). Instead of the laxity of drunken riot, they are to speak ' one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with ' their ' heart to the Lord ' (v. 19). This spirit of holy joyousness is to be sustained by continual thanksgiving ' for all things in the name of our

Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father' (v. 20). Finally, the social character of Christian morality is emphasized at what is the most difficult point by the demand, 'Subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ' (v. 21).

The positive virtues thus enjoined are truthfulness, moderation in anger, honest industry in order to generosity, the habit of edifying speech, a kindly, tender-hearted, forgiving disposition, purity, circumspectness, spiritual exaltation, sustained joyousness and thankfulness, together with mutual subjection. It is clear that this list enumerates the qualities which are essential to the intimate fellowship of a body that is at once spiritual and intimately social. The corresponding vices that are condemned destroy the possibility of such fellowship. The Apostle himself puts this consideration in the forefront in his exhortation: 'Putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one to his neighbour: *for we are members one of another*' (iv. 25). Falsehood intentionally obstructs fellowship. If it be thoughtless, it is because the obligations of fellowship are lightly esteemed. If it be deliberate and in pursuance of supposed self-interest, the offence against fellowship is double-dyed; in that case the end sought, as well as the means adopted, is fatal to the relationship of members of the same body. If falsehood be cowardly, this again shows distrust of others, or the lack of courage to show the transparent veracity which makes a triumphant appeal to the sense of membership in those towards whom it is displayed. The obligation to speak the

truth, with all that gathers round it, implies that each member so belongs to all and that all so belong to each that any attempts to obscure or falsify the truth are a fraud upon the body, inflicting both positive and negative injury upon it.

Both in this injunction and in the subsequent exhortation: 'Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be' (iv. 29), the Apostle lays the stress that is common in the New Testament upon the importance of speech. Speech stands in vital relations both to thought and to action. It gives hardness and definition to what otherwise would be but fleeting thoughts and feelings. Thereby it not only fixes them, but turns them into mental deeds into which the force of personality more or less enters. In the case of false or corrupt speech a certain shamelessness is present, which strikes at the heart of self-reverence and lowers the level of intercourse. Hence false or corrupt words prepare the conditions of false and corrupt deeds. It may be that such speech is more poisonous than are the corresponding deeds in themselves. For speech is self-disclosure. Evil speech is so easy that it may become habitual and may pervert the moral nature to such an extent as to make a healthy moral reaction unlikely or even impossible. Hence far-reaching personal and social demoralization. On the other hand, truthful and edifying speech gives expression to what is best and most brotherly in disposition, creates the social atmosphere which fosters high standards of thought and conduct,

and in both these ways strengthens the effective demand for deeds that are in keeping with it.

In like manner a social interest is clearly manifest in the exhortation: 'Be ye angry, and sin not' (iv. 26). Anger may be an important social duty; as also certainly is moderation in anger. The violation of membership by unbrotherly conduct calls for indignation, not so much in the interests of the aggrieved person, as in that of the whole body, and also of the offending member. If no anger follows upon such violation, the sanctity of brotherhood will be held of little account. The further exhortation, 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil,' throws additional light upon the social aspect of the matter. Prolonged indignation emphasizes the individual aspect of the offence and becomes in turn the foe of corporate unity. It means for the most part relentlessness towards the offender and self-assertion on the part of the offended. It is fatal, therefore, to the moderating temper, not only of mercy, but of righteousness. So again, when the Apostle adds to his injunction against stealing a prescription of labour, both as producing 'the thing that is good' and as having in view ability 'to give to him that hath need' (iv. 28), his intense concern for the whole body, as the object of Christian care and devotion, is made strikingly manifest. Obviously an anti-social quality is to be found in 'all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing' (iv. 31). These stand for fixed emotional states, which do more even than unfriendly

deeds to make fellowship impossible. Kindliness, tender-heartedness, and a forgiving spirit, on the other hand, bind the body together and heal its wounds.

The Apostle goes on, in the next place, to warn his readers against all impurity in deed or in thought. There is no need to deal with this subject in detail. That it is all-important to the well-being of the Church as a body is at once transparently clear. To begin with, it was needful to warn Christians who had been brought out of the laxity and grossness of heathen life against lapsing into the old sins. Still more there was need of protecting both the ideal and the actual life of the new community from all contamination. A new intimacy was being created, from which differences of sex and race and class and even age were eliminated. 'There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be neither male nor female: for ye are all one man [or personality] in Christ Jesus' (Gal. iii. 28; see also Col. iii. 11). As the ideal is high, so the perversion of it is most deadly. And the possibility of such perversion must have been painfully present to the Apostle's mind through his acquaintance with the manifold abuses of occult fellowships, of close contact between different races, especially in the case of slaves, and of the prevailing licentiousness. With such traditions and such surroundings there must needs be peril in the intimate relations of Church life, especially at seasons of emotional excitement. Yet the very life of the Church consists in maintaining

the practice of closest fellowship founded upon the ideal of complete unity in Christ. The safeguard against danger was to be found, as in every other case, not so much in the negatives of prudence as in the positive power of a spiritual uplifting. Hence the Apostle prefaces what he has to say by bidding his readers 'walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell' (v. 2). Fleshliness is the contradiction and destruction of true love, especially of love as revealed to us once for all in its ideal perfection by the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. By this exaltation and sacrifice of love, fellowship is put upon a new basis, or rather revealed in its true nature. It is only in the highest that real fellowship is possible, and that highest must become so completely the inmost habit of life as by its supremacy to transform all the impulses of human nature, purging them from old taints and raising them to co-operate for the highest ends of love. While, however, the social aspect of purity is thus made prominent as the only means of fulfilling the precept 'to walk in love,' the threefold reference which we have found in the general moral teaching of the Epistle stands out conspicuously here. God is Himself the vindicator of purity: 'Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh *the wrath of God* upon the sons of disobedience' (v. 6). Believers 'were once darkness, but are now light *in the Lord*' (v. 8). They are to 'walk as children of light . . . proving what is *well-pleasing*

unto the Lord' (v. 9–10). 'In the Lord' self-reverence and self-control are assured. Light is the element in which believers walk. A man of shameful deeds seeks to veil his shame and to prop up his self-respect by walking in darkness, as though deeds buried in secrecy could be ignored or forgotten. The test of moral qualities and character is that they bear the light. 'All things when they are reproved are made manifest by the light: for everything that is made manifest is light' (v. 13). Hence the Apostle adopts the language probably of one of the earliest Christian hymns:

> Awake, thou that sleepest,
> And arise from the dead,
> And Christ shall shine upon thee (v. 14).

Goodness, righteousness, and truth are the 'fruit of the light' (v. 9). The works of darkness are unfruitful (v. 11). Resplendent personal character is alone in keeping with the true relationships, both to God in Christ and to men in the sanctified intercourse of the Church.

It is striking that both here and elsewhere St. Paul closely associates covetousness with sins of the flesh (v. 3) and describes the covetous man as 'an idolater' (v. 5; see also Col. iii. 5). The two are coupled perhaps because they represent the intensest and most destructive of spiritual and anti-social cravings—most destructive both of personal character and of social well-being. They are the two deadliest foes of Christian life. Upon their expulsion the health of the Church and the pros-

pects of mankind depend. Covetousness is 'idolatry' in the sense that it centres a quasi-religious trust and pursuit on a base substitute for God. The covetous man seeks security, satisfaction, the sense of realized power in material possessions. Exaggerated, deformed, and misplaced desire is at the heart both of lust and greed. But greed to a peculiar degree leads its victims to stay themselves upon the possession of material objects of desire, which a profane imagination invests with all-sufficiency.

With the great social ideal of the Church before him, making so great a call upon its members and endangered at so many points by the weakness of the flesh and by perversity of spirit, it is not surprising that the Apostle should end by exhorting to circumspectness, to true spiritual exaltation, perpetual thanksgiving, and mutual subjection (v. 15–21). A careful walk and exaltation of spirit are a difficult combination. They can only be fused 'in the Spirit.' A careful walk may mean frigidity of temper, or calculating timidity. Exaltation, if it be merely such as can be ascribed to temperament or stimulated by wine, leads to riot. Yet both circumspectness and exaltation are needed in complete conjunction if the Church is to acquire the full vigour of a healthy body. There must be rigid avoidance of everything that mars the harmony of relations which are founded on a self-sacrificing life. Yet the body will languish and its functions will drag unless all anti-social elements are destroyed by a great uplifting and enlargement

of spirit. This can be found only in sustained joyousness, in continual thanksgiving—in short, in a temper which lifts men above the burdens, the anxieties, and the besetments of common life. With this exalted and gracious spirit purged from every vestige of self-seeking there goes a spirit of mutual subjection which, though most difficult, is both the test and the safeguard of all the rest.

The character which is thus described and enjoined is a unity, and, while it needs to be carefully cultivated, it is adopted by a decisive act of will. Both these truths are conveyed in the governing passage (iv. 17). The description contained therein shows how complete has been the transition. Those who 'gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness' (iv. 19) reached this extreme corruption because the two safeguards of healthy and normal conduct had been removed. First of all, the intellectual. The Gentiles 'walk, in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them' (iv. 17, 18). The general quality of their mind is indicated by the term 'vanity,' which signifies worthless levity in contrast with all that gives fruitful seriousness and elevation to mental life. This state of mind is further characterized by such darkening of the understanding as destroys all true discrimination in regard to the ends and habits of practical conduct. Such mental deterioration, arising out of still deeper moral depravity, is accompanied by ignorance, for with such a disposition knowledge in the

fullest and weightiest sense of the word is neither sought after nor valued. The other safeguard consists in the higher sensibilities of healthily constituted affections. But in the case of the Gentiles the 'hardening of their heart' has so advanced that they have become 'past feeling' (iv. 18, 19). Yet this destruction of the higher spiritual elements of life, while shutting out the possibility of true and fair conduct, does not destroy activity, but stimulates it along the foulest lines. The intensity of Gentile uncleanness is represented by the three expressions, namely, that they '*gave themselves up* to lasciviousness' with complete self-surrender, '*to work* all uncleanness' with laborious industry and with the '*greediness*' of insatiable desire (iv. 19). The Apostle has previously pointed out how easily those who have suffered such degradation can be practised upon. The lusts that they follow are 'the lusts of deceit' (iv. 22). Their entire nature, their ends, their habits, the atmosphere in which they flourish, are all completely 'of deceit.' No wonder, then, that such had been 'tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error' (iv. 14).

Such a condition represents the last extremity of decay. The 'manner of life' thus described is that 'of the old man which waxeth corrupt, after the lusts of deceit' (iv. 22). The adjective 'old' is intended to suggest not merely a past state of things in contrast to a fresh one, but the senile decay of the old in contrast with the youthful vigour of the new.

Just as the old disposition was a unity, although exhibiting the anarchy of decay, so the new is a unity, in this case marked by the harmonious co-operation of all the energies of a quickened and purified nature. The 'new man . . . after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth' (iv. 24). This transformation is so complete that it is represented as the entire *putting off of the old man* by a decisive deed done once for all, and, simultaneously, as *the putting on of the new man* in like completeness, both of its characteristic qualities and of permanent acquisition. To the same effect St. Paul writes to the Colossians: 'Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created Him' (Col. iii. 9–10).

It is clear, therefore, that the work of redemption in Christ is not accomplished independently of personality and will-power. Sinfulness stands, not only for perverse transgression and failure, but also for the failure of will-power to desire and steadfastly to seek after good. Christ by His redemptive grace quickens and renews the inmost personality. The immediate result of this vital change is the restoration of will-power and its enablement to effect once for all by a final decision the complete reformation of life, casting off the old and assuming the new.

This change of habit thus complete and thoroughgoing is, however, brought about and sustained by something deeper than even the most strenuous and successful act of will. The change is vital.

By it decrepitude is succeeded by the fresh youthfulness of a new beginning. This is the wonder of it, wrought then and now only by the grace of God in Christ. The Apostle exhorts his readers to enjoy to the full this vital change; 'that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind' (iv. 23). This represents not merely an energetic moral decision, but an act of spiritual recourse to the recreative energy of Christ through the Cross and the Spirit.

The vital change thus brought about, and made manifest in the total transformation of character described by the Apostle, leads at once to the hallowing of life in all its relationships, and particularly in those of the home. Hence the Apostle goes on to deal in succession with the duties of wives, husbands, children, parents, servants (or slaves), and masters (v. 22, vi. 9). In regard to all these relationships he enters into details that are of great importance. Yet two general features are even more important than the specific exhortations, because they underlie the latter. In the first place, it is most noteworthy that the Apostle should be thus careful as to these basal relationships of human life. The general tendency of those who found or promote new fellowships is that they ignore or slight old relationships. The new represents the breaking away from the old instead of being securely built upon it. The healthfulness of the Apostle's outlook is in no respect more strikingly shown than in this, that while dwelling upon and setting forth the transcendent and mystical relationships of the Church, which blot out all

human distinctions, he proceeds to emphasize the sanctity and importance of the ordinary and central relationships of life, the relationships of the home.

In the next place, St. Paul, while he accepts without question the general structure of domestic relationships as he finds it, transforms the whole by the new spirit of Christ. It is manifest that he does nothing to alter the external fabric of these relationships. This obvious fact has been much discussed in so far as it relates to the Apostle's attitude towards slavery. There is no need to enter upon this part of the question here, except to remark that the gospel of Christ works from within outwards. Both our Lord and His Apostles were content to leave the external organization of society to take its own proper evolution under the influence of the new standards and motives which the gospel supplied. It must not be assumed either that St. Paul had prevision of the social changes that were to come, or that he was dissatisfied in this respect with things as he found them, provided that the possibilities latent within them were fully realized through the Spirit of Christ. Not only the expectation of our Lord's Advent, but also the absorbing experience of the new and heavenly life, prevented the Apostle and the first Christians from contemplating far-reaching changes in the organization of society. Moreover, even revelation and inspiration have their limitations. It is not permitted even to prophets and apostles to envisage the far-reaching, yet secondary, results of the divine illumination that has been

vouchsafed to them. If they were to speak to all future ages, they must be effectively established in their own times. What is most vital in their teaching touches, not the external organization of society, which must be fashioned and refashioned by the progressive working of spiritual forces, but the inward spirit, by which the external organization should be quickened and uplifted. Hence not only does St. Paul leave the authority and power of the master over the slave untouched, but he also assumes and enforces the headship of the husband and father over the wife and the children. This is simply the *patria potestas*, as it was known to Roman law. But the headship thus defined was substantially the same among Jews, Greeks, and barbarians. As has already been seen, St. Paul makes striking theological use of this paternal headship in his great saying: 'For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every fatherhood [as the bond of family unity] in heaven and on earth is named '— that is, derives its existence and nature (iii. 14, 15). In some respects St. Paul's teaching in regard to the place of the husband and father in the family has no more finality than has his teaching in regard to masters and slaves, in so far as the form and, therefore, the precise rights and duties of the relationships are concerned. And this for the reasons which have already been explained. The rights of the husband and of the father have been greatly limited since the Apostle's time as the result of Christianity itself.

Yet there is an important difference between the

two cases. The relationships between master and slave (or servant) are and must be comparatively external and accidental. They may be remodelled in many ways without affecting the inmost life of the community. It is otherwise with the relationships of home. Here unity, coherence, and permanence are of the first importance. Law is both the outcome and the safeguard of life. Fellowship can only be enjoyed through discipline. A headship apparently there must be ; and in the typical family it can only be vested in the husband and father. Hence the domestic order set forth by the Apostle may fairly be treated as permanent and essential to the well-being and even to the continuance of family life.

Yet what is most important is the way in which the forms of domestic relationships become filled with the new spirit as St. Paul handles them. Not only does the new spirit of life which has transformed the moral personality of believers overflow to the domestic relationships, so that they are fulfilled in an altogether new and holier way, but this spirit of love has a new example presented to it for every one of these relationships. This example is that of Christ. He is the Husband and Head of the Church, the Revealer of the Father in and through a filial obedience that knew no limits. He is the Master of all ; yet He had taken upon Himself ' the form of a slave,' and had become ' obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross ' (Phil. ii. 7, 8).

Hence our Lord is the pattern of all headship and authority, on the one hand, and of true submission

on the other. The effect upon all the ordinary relationships of life immediately becomes clear. A recognition of headship is demanded of wives (v. 22–24), of children (vi. 1–3), and of slaves (vi. 5–8). Wives are to be in subjection unto their own husbands, children obedient to their parents, as is required by the Fifth Commandment, and slaves are to serve their masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, and with goodwill.

Yet headship is altogether transformed. 'The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the Church, being Himself the Saviour of the body' (v. 23). From this the exhortation follows: 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it' (v. 25). The object of Christ's self-oblation was 'that He might present the Church to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish' (v. 27). That is to say, Christ's headship is manifested in the fullness of a self-oblation, which has for its end the uplifting of the Church and its perfecting in fellowship with Himself. His headship is exercised, not at the expense of the Church, but in its behalf. The relationship is so intimate that each partner in it can only find complete self-realization in the other. If this be true in regard to Christ and the Church, through His glorious condescension, equally is it true, as the Apostle shows, of husbands and wives. Nay more, just as the Church is the 'body of Christ' (i. 23) and as believers 'are members of His body' (v. 30), so 'ought husbands also to love their own

wives as their own bodies ' (v. 28). ' He that loveth his own wife loveth himself : for no man ever hated his own flesh ; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the Church ' (v. 28, 29). There is, therefore, such unity of being as includes identity of interests and almost of personality. Hence, as the self-devotion of the husband is answered by the self-devotion of the wife, headship on the one hand and subjection on the other are suffused by a spiritual kinship which results in perfect and inseparable fellowship. Under such conditions the headship of the husband becomes more and more the executive of the wife's mind and will.

So again, in respect of the headship of parents over their children : ' Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath ; but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord ' (vi. 4). The instruction to children includes obedience to the mother as well as to the father (vi. 1, 2). The corresponding exhortation is to fathers alone ; partly because under the *patria potestas* they are treated as the head of the family and the source of its discipline ; and partly, perhaps, because there is more danger of the abuse of authority in the case of the father than in that of the mother. Discipline must not be self-willed or provocative, but solely with a view to the development and training of true personality, which eventually outgrows the need of such discipline. In the same way masters are to show goodwill to their slaves ' and forbear threatening ' (vi. 9), remembering in the exercise of authority ' that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and

there is no respect of persons with Him' (vi. 9). How fully and tenderly this spirit is to be exercised St. Paul shows in the wonderful Epistle to Philemon, which was carried perhaps in the same letter-bag with this Epistle. Hence, throughout, the example of Christ brings self-sacrifice into all relationships and uplifts the personality of all who enter into them in and through and unto a new fellowship of holy love.

A question arises at this stage as to priority between the divine and the human relationships which the Apostle treats, not merely as illustrating one another, but as vitally bound up together. Which has priority? The Fatherhood of God or that of man, the headship of Christ or of the husband, the lordship of Christ or that of the earthly master? It is clear that, in a sense, the human comes first. It is through experience of the human that the corresponding divine relationships are first suggested, and under the forms of the human that the divine relationships are conceived. Yet, while the forms of the divine relationships are suggested by the human, the former are so transcendent and the divine reality stands in such creative and constitutive relations to the human, that thought is compelled to seek in God the archetype of human fatherhood and its source; in Christ that of headship, whether of the husband or of the master.

At first sight, the only human relationships which seem to have no divine archetype are those of wifehood and motherhood. The father and the child, the master and the slave, or servant, all find their

patterns in God and in Christ. At first sight, the wife has only a human pattern set before her—that of the Church in its relationship to Christ as its head. Yet more careful examination shows that this is not the case. The Church is not a human organization, but a divine organism, which exists only in and through the Holy Spirit. St. Paul never draws the inference, but it may not be altogether far-fetched to find in the Spirit who glorifies Christ (John xvi. 14), by constituting and perfecting the Church in mystic union with Him, the pattern of the wife's life in relation to her husband. So also the Fatherhood of God must be apprehended as containing within itself the pattern of all true motherhood.

Speaking generally, the Epistle shows that as the collective life of the Church and the individual life of believers is 'in Christ,' so all the domestic relations have become incorporated in Him. The subjection of wives is 'as unto the Lord' (v. 22). The headship of the husband is 'as Christ also is the Head of the Church' (v. 23, 25, 29, 32). The obedience of children is to be rendered '*in the Lord*' (vi. 1), just as the discipline administered by the father is 'the chastening and admonition *of the Lord*' (vi. 4). The service of slaves is to be rendered '*as unto Christ*' (vi. 5 and 7), and with the expectation of recompense '*from the Lord*' (vi. 8). Masters are to behave to their servants in the full consciousness that 'both *their Master and yours* is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with Him' (vi. 9).

It is impossible to go more closely into detail. Yet one word must be added in further exposition

of the headship of Christ over His Church as it is described by the Apostle. Husbands are exhorted to love their wives 'even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it; that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that He might present the Church to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish' (v. 25–27). Unquestionably the reference is to baptism, which is treated here as a means of *cleansing*; not in the more thoroughgoing way in which it is presented to us in the Epistle to the Romans as the means of *burial* with Christ and of *resurrection* with Him (Rom. vi. 4, 5). Even here, however, the baptism is not of cleansing only, but of rejuvenation. It is said to remove not only the 'spot' of defilement, but the 'wrinkle' of age. It is the means of conveying sanctification (v. 26), the end sought being that the Church 'should be holy and without blemish' (v. 27). It is to be noted that there are two parts in the sacrament: 'the washing of water' is accompanied by 'the word' (v. 26). The Greek text suggests some specific word (*ῥήμα*) by which the sacrament was not only accompanied, but constituted as such. That word can hardly have been any other than the Name of the Lord Jesus, apparently the primitive baptismal formula, as will be seen from repeated mention in the Acts of the Apostles. This 'word,' thus accompanying 'the washing of water,' was at once a proclamation and a confession. As a proclamation it offered the grace of Christ and incorpora-

tion in Him to the recipient of baptism. As a confession with the mouth it was intended to convey the belief of the heart (Rom. x. 9) in the lordship of Christ Jesus, risen from the dead, and also to express complete self-surrender to Him. The efficacy of the sacrament, therefore, depended upon the Name. Thus apprehended, baptism is the gateway into life in Christ, as set forth in this Epistle, and the vehicle of the quickening and sanctifying energy through which believers are introduced into His life.

The brief survey which has been made of the practical exhortations of the Epistle shows how remarkable is the combination between the mystic experience which uplifts men to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places (ii. 6) and the stress that is laid upon practical conduct in all the relationships of life. The mysticism of the Apostle, so far from blotting out or disparaging the ordinary structure of human life, emphasizes its importance, deepens its meaning, and exalts the spirit that pervades the whole. The mutual suspicion that for the most part keeps mysticism and moralism apart is entirely non-existent for St. Paul. Probably he was unconscious of any descent in passing from the heavenly sublimities of the life in Christ to the principles or even the details of earthly relationships. Absorption of all the highest energies in Christ, so far from withdrawing them from ordinary relationships and interests, invigorates them to fill all these with a meaning and power hitherto unknown. What is the cause of this complete reconciliation, or rather this vital union, between spiritual aspiration which is

lifted above the world, and practical endeavour which finds its sphere within the world ? The answer is twofold. It is both objective and subjective. In the first place, the object of spiritual aspiration determines its whole temper. God in Christ is the object apprehended by faith ; enjoyed and sought after in the fellowship of love. God thus made known and enjoyed is ' the Father,' and His Fatherhood is at once gracious, creative, and sovereign. He has Himself constituted the world with all its manifold relationships and concerns. His grace gives an assurance that the constitution of things is in itself beneficent and linked up with the highest purposes of fatherly love. His sovereignty is a guarantee that, despite the inroads of evil, the original beneficence of the divine purpose in creation will be made good. And not only so, God is made manifest and accessible in Christ ; and Christ has become incarnate and is now exalted ' far above all the heavens that He might fill all things ' (iv. 10). Hence the knowledge and enjoyment of God are made possible in and through a divine-human personality, which has made earth divine and heaven human. It is impossible to separate human nature, even that of our Lord, from the texture of human relationships and experience in which alone it has actuality. In the same way, our Lord's ascension in the complete integrity and the enhanced energy of His perfected human nature shows that the blessedness of heaven consists, not in the stripping off, but in the perfecting of the human. Christian mysticism can only live as it apprehends God in Christ, and God made known

as Sovereign, Creator, and Redeemer in Christ Jesus, the divine Man Incarnate, risen, and ascended. Such mysticism must needs be at once spiritual, moral, and frankly human. It reaches its goal, not through abstraction and negation, but by entrance into a filial inheritance, the rich resources of which are enjoyed by the full acceptance and sanctification of human life throughout the entire range of its normal relationships with mankind and with the world.

Furthermore, religion and morality are completely fused, owing to the fact that in Christ religion conveys to morality a divine ideal and a perfect example. Only heathen converts could realize to the full the startling novelty of the exhortation, 'Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children' (v. 1), when such imitation is understood as the ardent pursuit of holiness and of moral excellence in every relationship of life. In the heathen mind Godhead had, for the most part, been associated with complete and even outrageous freedom from the sanctities of decent human life. The emotional exaltation of religion had been marked by rites and customs which cast these sanctities aside on the express ground that the service of God could only be consummated by transgressing the moralities of men. Higher influences had indeed done much, though imperfectly, to purify certain cults; yet the older legends remained and rival deities reigned to stimulate and satisfy the lower cravings of debased naturalism in religion. The Churches to which this Epistle went were only too familiar with all this.

It had brought about a divorce between popular religion and morality. Not only had it prevented religion from acting either as an elevating or purifying influence in the ordinary conduct and affairs of life, but it had made religion an active agent of moral debasement. Who can measure the change that was brought about, when through the gospel men came to apprehend God as All-holy, and His service as consisting simply in the life of holiness carried out and expressed throughout the entire range of human life ?

And this divine holiness has taken human form and definition in Christ, whose perfect life, as has been seen, supplies not only the pattern of human conduct in general, but the ideal of every relationship upon which human society is built up. When the perfect divine ideal is thus made manifest in an example which expresses its meaning in completely human terms, the vision and exaltation of religion supply the principles and power of a morality which receives an altogether larger meaning now that it is touched with the new infinity alike of God and of life in God.

Nor is this all. The supremacy of love in the Christian life both marks and safeguards the complete union between religion and morality, to the great enlargement of both. The repeated emphasis that is laid on love throughout the Epistle is as noteworthy as in the writings of St. John. It is made equally prominent in regard both to religion and to morality. Its importance as of the very essence of the former is shown in the opening state-

ment that the end for which God has chosen men in Christ is that they 'should be holy and without blemish before Him *in love*' (i. 4). The apprehension of the 'love of Christ which passeth knowledge' is the great object of spiritual aspiration, and it can only be attained by those who are 'rooted and grounded *in love*' (iii. 17–19). And equally, love is the ruling principle governing the whole conduct of Christians in all the relationships and all the concerns of life. Again and again is this insisted upon. Mutual forbearance *in love* is enjoined (iv. 2), truthfulness *in love* (iv. 15), and more generally Christians are to 'walk *in love*' (v. 2).

Yet love, for the Apostle, is one and indivisible both in its religious and its moral reference. It pervades and unifies the entire realm of divine and human relationships. Henceforth religion is only explicable in terms of love. Nothing else has spiritual value. Nothing can henceforth survive in the service of God that is not either an essential part of love or a means of giving expression to it. Such love, it need hardly be said, is far removed from mere sentiment, let alone fondness. Reverent appreciation, intense spiritual pursuit, and joyful obedience are of its very essence. Love comes to a new birth and a complete transformation by being fixed upon its divine object—God in Christ, who has given so transcendent a revelation of His holy love as henceforth to recreate the meaning of love and to exalt its standards. This new revelation is the means of conveying a fresh energy of holy love to all who apprehend it through the Spirit. Life is charged

with a new infinity, made manifest, not in the realm of natural emotion, but in the heavenly sphere of filial fellowship with the Father.

Hence this fulfilment of religion supplies the master principle and inspiration of morality. It redeems it from the timid circumspection which seeks the minute regulation of life. To use Milton's great words :

> Virtue could see to do what virtue would
> By her own radiant light, though stars and sun
> Were in the flat sea sunk.[1]

Such love vitalizes and guides conduct in every relationship. It redeems men from lurking selfishness, not only of deed, but of motive. It gives zest and expansion to all duties. Far from imposing fetters upon love, the relationships of life create for it opportunities and channels. It pours itself forth in ceaseless and manifold service, instead of being satisfied with the prescribed rules and customs of common life. The intensity of its response to the love of God is measured by the zeal with which it returns to the service of God throughout the whole range of the human life, which has been constituted in God from the beginning and has now been reconstituted in Him.

One other feature must be noticed, in which the divine example of Christ and the divine principle of love combine to bring about a more generous moral development. One of the greatest problems

[1] Comus.

of moral life is to combine zeal with gentleness, a strenuous endeavour to uplift moral standards with mercy towards those who transgress them. In addition, there is always the danger of a bargaining spirit in morality, the expectation of a worthy return to worthy conduct. Nor can the temptation to resentment under wrong be overlooked, though it may be all the more insidious when it is concealed by the mask of moral earnestness. All these dangers are overcome by obedience to the Apostle's exhortation, 'Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, and forgiving each other, *even as God also in Christ forgave you*' (iv. 32). Love, like its Lord, must be redemptive and restorative. While it reverences the structure of social relationships and finds a more sacred meaning and more exalted opportunities throughout the whole, love must repair the breaches, restore those who fall outside the pale, and assert the sanctity of the ideal, not in condemnation only, but in mercy and forgiveness.

Such is the place of love in the new life in Christ Jesus. In the sphere of this life love and power are equivalent terms. The power of God is simply His love in manifestation. The spiritual power which works in lives that are recreated in Christ Jesus is simply love in operation. The first requirement of truly Christian thought is that it should take seriously and explore this identity of love and power. Ordinary thought supposes that they lie outside one another and are only brought into occasional co-operation. This view does no justice to the higher teaching either of St. Paul or of St. John. Dante stood on the

threshold of the higher truth when he sang of 'the Love which moves the Sun and all the other stars.' Yet love, both in its divine manifestation and its human response, varies according to the spiritual capacity of those who receive and return it. And this capacity is largest in those who, in receiving the adoption of sons, have opened to them realms of spiritual life and divine fellowship undreamt of before. In such hearts love reigns as a new dynamic, a life-energy, that casts out death.

Hence the Epistle to the Ephesians is the standing witness that a new epoch has dawned upon the spiritual life of man. It is not progress, but resurrection; not outward reformation, but inward quickening and transformation. In love all holy affections come to birth and have full play. Men live under the constant influence of heavenly suggestions and associations. Yet of all impressions conveyed by this Epistle the clearest and most convincing is that the Christian facts and the Christian experience are inseparable. The recreative and uplifting power of love works only in and through the Fact of Christ. Blot out any part of this Fact—the Incarnation, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension—and the working of the divine power is destroyed or maimed. The history is alike the foundation upon which experience rests, the mould in which it is fashioned, the vital force and substance out of which it is wrought. The history and the experience support and verify one another.

Nor is this all. The historic fact and the inward

experience are united in a living personal fellowship with God. And with God not only as transcendent, but as immanent. In Christ men 'are builded together for an habitation of God in the Spirit' (ii. 22).

CHAPTER XII

THE SPIRITUAL CONFLICT

The practical portion of the Epistle to the Ephesians concludes with a description of the spiritual conflict in which Christians are engaged. The nature of the foe and the means by which the victory of final salvation may be secured are set forth in striking details. 'Finally,' the Apostle says, 'be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places' (vi. 10–12). The fullness with which St. Paul has previously dealt with the life and conduct of the new man as involving the putting off of the old, has done something to prepare his readers for the notes of warning and guidance that are now given. Else it might seem strange that an Epistle which represents life in Christ as so complete a triumph of the might of God's power and as leading to so heavenly an experience should bring its readers face to face

with such grim realities as are contained in this section. Yet there is no discordance between these contrasted features of the Epistle. Indeed, the weight and effect of the earlier and more exultant portion of the Epistle are increased and not diminished by St. Paul's full and insistent recognition of the existence of spiritual perils, and of the fact that, even when the new man has been put on, the preservation and fulfilment of its life needs, not only constant watchfulness and unfailing strength, but an equipment complete at every point.

To begin with, it is significant that St. Paul, 'the prisoner in the Lord' as he reminds his readers (iv. 1), should instruct them that 'our wrestling is not against flesh and blood' (vi. 12). This is all the more striking when we remember that in writing to the Corinthians years before he had reminded them of how he 'had fought with beasts at Ephesus' (1 Cor. xv. 32), as though for the moment he considered this the most critical experience of his warfare. Yet clearly the passage now under consideration represents the Apostle's permanent point of view. The severity of his conflicts with violent and cruel men, fitly named 'wild beasts,' was a hardship; but only the conflict with spiritual foes was both for him and for his readers a danger.

All the qualities of the Apostle's character combined to make him realize and enforce this truth. To begin with, his calm and incomparable courage, which at once reduced physical dangers of every kind to their proper place of subordination. It is

impossible to conceive that St. Paul could have been deterred from any purpose upon which his mind was set by any extremity of bodily peril, whether from physical nature or from human foes. Moreover, the full development of his spiritual life in Christ not only enabled him to recognize spiritual evils as being the only real evils, but compelled him to appreciate how urgent and constantly formidable they are. Hence it goes without saying that for him the ordinary conception of the relations and proportions of spiritual and physical evil is exactly reversed. In fact, the Apostle's experience that God has ' made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus ' (ii. 6), is the indispensable precondition of his consciousness that ' our wrestling is not against flesh and blood.' Only this great spiritual experience could enable St. Paul thus clearly to apprehend the source and nature of the real danger. Only those who have been quickened and exalted by Christ have their spiritual senses sufficiently sharpened to perceive and measure the foes with which they have to deal.

Moreover, St. Paul is at one with all those who have enjoyed high and intimate fellowship with God in realizing the solidarity of all evil and the spirituality of its nature, as well as in conceiving it to be an embodied order directed by malign personal influence. Of the Apostle's teaching in regard to the personality of the devil and of the subordinate principalities and powers, enough has been said already. Here it is more important to note that the forces of evil are described by the

Apostle as bound together and unified in a complex organization. They are obviously most formidable. And they are mobilized for ceaseless aggression, and for permanent occupation of the positions that are surrendered to them. Yet their power, threatening as it is, has its limitations. They are ' the world-rulers *of this darkness*,' although their revolt has been carried out ' in the heavenly places ' themselves (vi. 12). Their disordered rule confuses the spiritual and the cosmic, letting loose all kinds of elemental impulses to the destruction of spiritual well-being.

Furthermore, the Apostle's description suggests the utmost subtlety and cunning of attack, for he speaks of ' the wiles of the devil.' And this is accompanied by the further suggestion of intimate and ceaseless access to the inmost personality of those who are threatened by evil. In a very real sense the threatening influence of the ordered hosts of evil is *inward*, because their assault is delivered against the inmost personality. Yet it is noticeable that in the case of those who are in Christ Jesus these hosts are represented as *external* foes, operating outside and not within the recreated personality. This may be equipped in complete panoply against them, because those who are in Christ Jesus have attained to real, though not as yet final, immunity from invasion. The danger is still serious, but it has become so external that it may be guarded against by the complete supply and the vigorous use of ' the whole armour of God ' (vi. 10–13).

At the same time the Apostle appears to warn his readers that the fight will become yet more intense, reaching its decisive issue ' in the evil day ' (vi. 13). It is with a view to this day that they are to arm themselves that they ' may be able to withstand . . . and, having done all, to stand ' (vi. 13). Probably the Apostle has in his mind ' the falling away ' when ' the man of sin, the son of perdition ' shall be revealed, of which he had long ago warned the Thessalonians (2 Thess. ii. 3).

Yet even now the conflict is intense. St. Paul speaks of it as ' our wrestling ' (vi. 12), a figure which, although it is out of keeping with the subsequent exhortation to ' take up the whole armour of God,' is intended to suggest the closeness and stubbornness of the fight. The opening exhortation, ' Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might ' (vi. 10), contains, in substance, the meaning of the whole passage. All that follows is simply St. Paul's way of expounding what is meant in these opening words. His readers are to realize their strength by an attitude of steadfast resolution. Yet this resolution is not that of self-reliance, but of complete and ceaseless resort to the indispensable means of victory to be found only ' in the Lord and in the strength of His might.' The subjective strength of the believer is simply his active and habitual appropriation of the objective strength of the Lord.

The strength thus realized ' in the Lord ' is provided with complete equipment. ' The whole armour '—the panoply—' of God ' is within reach.

The one thing needful is that every part of it should be fully utilized. For this reason, no doubt, St. Paul gives emphasis to the importance of *completeness* both in the provision and in the use of it by his reiterated mention of 'the panoply' of God (vi. 11, 13). Every part of the equipment supplied 'in the Lord' is essential to victory, and must be put in its place for effective use. The panoply consists of girdle, breastplate, military sandals, large shield, helmet, and sword. The girdle is said to be truth, the breastplate righteousness, the sandals 'the preparation of the gospel of peace,' the shield faith, the helmet salvation, while the sword is 'the sword of the Spirit'—supplied by Him—namely, 'the word of God.' These qualities must be briefly examined, and then it will be easy to perceive why the Apostle likens each one of them to the particular piece of armour chosen in each case.

The term 'truth' is used here in exactly the same sense in which it has been previously employed in the phrase 'as truth is in Jesus' (iv. 21). It stands for such direct and sincere apprehension of Christ as supplies the living ideals of spiritual truth to believers. The reception of the truth embodied in Jesus becomes truth of disposition, the frank and full response to spiritual reality as the guide of life. If 'truth' suggests spiritual intuition, the next term, 'righteousness,' points to moral integrity and straightness. As used here, the term is practical and not narrow. It includes the wholehearted purpose to fulfil all the relationships of divine and human life by a complete discharge of

the obligations they impose. 'The preparation,' or preparedness, 'of the gospel of peace' represents such acceptance of the gospel as fills the heart with a sense of peace—of healthful wholeness, of the inward and entire harmony which destroys all doubt, distraction, and uncertainty. 'Faith' must be understood in its evangelical meaning as the active acceptance and appropriation of Christ and of all that is contained in Him. 'Salvation' is the joyful experience of the complete deliverance that comes from Christ. 'The word of God' is the authoritative revelation which can and should be accepted as trustworthy with unquestioning confidence.

With these definitions in mind, which are drawn from the Apostle's own use of the terms in this Epistle and elsewhere, the appropriateness of his selection of just these qualities for each particular piece of armour he names becomes quickly evident. Truth is the girdle, because it braces the fighter and keeps everything in its place. Righteousness is the breastplate because it, above all, guards the vital organs of spiritual life. Christians are to be shod with the gospel of peace because the sense of wholeness and harmony supplied by the gospel gives just the sureness of footing and the alacrity that are needed in a hand-to-hand fight. Faith with its active appropriation of Christ enables men to 'quench all the fiery darts of the evil one' (vi. 16). These most deadly weapons of ancient assault may well stand as the most suitable figure to represent the cruel and deadly temptations of the devil.

Their deadliness is, however, completely quenched by the whole-hearted acceptance of Christ. Faith, therefore, is the all-availing shield by which the Christian is protected against the most dangerous besetments. The head is the most vulnerable part of the body, and, perhaps, the spiritual man is most vulnerable when he fails fully to enjoy salvation. Hence salvation, gladly experienced, is the helmet. Thus the defensive armour is now complete. One weapon of offence is needed by the Christian soldier. It is 'the sword of the Spirit,' namely, 'the word of God,' the strong and unfaltering use of which is sufficient to smite the mightiest foe and win a decisive if hard-fought battle.

There are references to armour in other epistles of St. Paul. Writing to the Thessalonians, he says, 'But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation' (1 Thess. v. 8). The variations between the two passages warn us against too rigid a use of either. Yet in the main the exposition just given is confirmed by this slighter passage. If 'faith and love' are said to be the breastplate in this latter, it must be remembered that just these qualities go to the making of righteousness; for righteousness as the joyful fulfilment of relationships with the discharge of their obligations is impossible except as the expression of faith and love. Further, the statement that '*the hope* of salvation' is the helmet confirms the correctness of the interpretation that salvation protects the believer just where he is most vulnerable

by maintaining his joyful confidence and sure expectation of good in Christ. The other passage is in the Epistle to the Romans, where St. Paul says, 'The night is far spent, and the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light' (Rom. xiii. 12). This description may well be taken as the summary of the more elaborate passage in this Epistle. 'The panoply of God' is 'the armour of light,' suited to the daylight, radiant in the splendour of holiness conferred by Christ.

Hence this survey makes it clear that the whole armour of God consists in nothing else than the specific gift of God in Christ Jesus fully realized in a truly evangelical experience. Each piece of the armour is simply one particular element of the one gift in Christ. It can only be understood in the light of the whole and enjoyed in the unity of the whole. But the one gift in Christ, manifold in its unity, only becomes *armour* just in so far as it is subjectively appropriated and employed. Indeed, the full enjoyment of salvation in all its spiritual and moral significance is the only protection against the assaults of evil. The force and influence of the true are the only, but the sufficient, means of repelling the false. Yet just as believers are bidden to be strong, not in themselves, but 'in the Lord,' so every piece of spiritual armour carries them out beyond themselves into something which is contained in Christ and can only be assumed and used as the continuous gift of Christ. Even when the Apostle has to deal with moral dangers

and besetments, he does not rely upon merely moral means for their overthrow, but upon moral means as reinforced continually by those elements of strength and many-sided completeness which are only to be found in Christ Himself.

For this reason, the Apostle having enumerated the panoply of God, continues, 'With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak' (vi. 18–20). At no point and at no moment is the attitude of the believer self-sufficient or self-contained. It is only in the life of prayer that he can utilize spiritual resources, which always come to him from without and which yet must always be made his own. Prayer is the indispensable activity by which this living process of appropriation is carried on. Never for a moment can the Christian life in any of its activities be broken off from this spiritual contact with its source without immediate weakening or failure. The way in which the Apostle passes on from his exhortation to put forth all the energies of spiritual strength to insist upon ceaseless prayer and supplication in the Spirit serves as a needful reminder of this most important principle.

And just as the individual Christian must never be cut off from the sources of strength 'in the

Lord ' or ' in the Spirit,' so he can never be isolated from his comrades in the faith. His ceaseless prayer and watching is to be ' in all perseverance and supplication *for all the saints.*' All the personal interests of the individual in Christ are in unison with those of the divine commonwealth as a whole. Personal supplication is never completely Christian or truly effective so long as it is self-contained in narrow individualism. Prayer ' in the Spirit,' just because it is personal and spiritual, is always social in its range and sympathy.

The Apostle goes on to add, ' And on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains ; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak ' (vi. 19–20). This final request is dictated by the Apostle's sense of personal need, by his sensitive craving for support, and by his sense of solidarity with the whole Church. This appeal for and reliance upon the prayers of the Church are characteristic of his temper throughout the whole of his ministry, and not merely in this time of imprisonment and trial. Yet the request, while it arises out of the Apostle's sense of need, is indeed an added protection to the Church in its conflict with evil. To associate the prayers of the Church, not only with the interests of all the saints, but, above all, with the work of its greatest Apostle, means that they are elevated, broadened, and intensified in a way that greatly increases the spiritual and moral safety of each individual. For loyalty

to Christ and dependence upon His spiritual gift are raised to their highest point by becoming allied in intense sympathy and fervid zeal with the ambassadorship by which Christ is seeking to reconcile and save mankind. Salvation is never completely enjoyed and, therefore, never held fast unless its enjoyment means active and prayerful participation in the world-embracing purpose and ministry of Christ.

In speaking of himself as an ambassador, St. Paul adds, 'in chains.' This addition may in part be a touching plea for their remembrance of him. It may suggest the pressure of irksome limitations which hampered him, or the difficulties which made boldness of speech all the harder even for so fearless an ambassador of Christ. Yet, while these elements may undoubtedly be present, it seems probable that St. Paul's reference to his bonds here, as in chap. iii., refers rather to an honourable distinction, his decoration in the service of his Lord. In this sense he ended his Epistle to the Galatians by saying, 'I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus' (Gal. vi. 17), where he treats the slave-marks of suffering as being a token of honour. So here his bonds are in very deed a sign of his sincerity and efficiency as an ambassador of Christ. The decoration of this Order—the Order of hardship, suffering, and shame—is the only honour conferred by Christ upon His faithful servants; it is the badge of their nobility. If this be so, these words may well stand in line with the Apostle's declaration to the Colossians, 'Now I rejoice in my suffer-

ings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church' (Col. i. 24).

Upon this lofty note the Epistle ends, save for the human and homely words in which St. Paul accredits Tychicus, the bearer of the Epistle, to his readers (vi. 21, 22). The Apostle loves and fosters the most intimate personal relationships. His desire to establish such relations is never satisfied by a letter, however full and convincing in its sympathy. When he is absent from the Churches in which is his very life, he seeks to find the human link, the man charged with his special confidence, and, therefore, suitable to be sent, as he says, 'for this very purpose that ye may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts' (vi. 22). With this characteristic touch of personal affection and solicitude the Apostle passes to the final benediction.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ULTIMATE GOAL AND THE TEMPER IT INSPIRES

THE Apostle concludes the Epistle to the Ephesians with a benediction which, while it contains much that is common to all his farewells, has some distinctive features of its own.

'Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in uncorruptness' (vi. 23, 24).

There is no need to dwell particularly on the familiar words 'peace,' 'love,' 'faith,' and 'grace,' all of which are to be understood with the amplitude of meaning given to them in this Epistle and throughout the other writings of St. Paul. The statement that the twofold source of these gifts is 'God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' also re-echoes St. Paul's habitual language, and shows once more that God has become for him 'God in Christ Jesus.' Two special features, however, are to be noted. In the first place, the farewell 'to the brethren' is accompanied by a prayer for 'all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ.' This wider benediction is not to be found elsewhere. No doubt it may be accounted for by the fact that this

circular letter, addressed in part to Churches which the Apostle had never seen, made him mindful of the evergrowing Christian community that was spreading out from the centres in which the faith had first been planted. Still more, the expansive outlook and the equally expansive hope that dominate the Epistle find expression in the catholicity of its closing words.

The other feature to be noted is the qualification contained in the last two words, 'uncorruptness.' The general use of this word, at all events in the Apostle's time, made it the equivalent of immortality. It connotes freedom from the dissolution and physical corruption of death. Its extension to include freedom from moral corruption is later and subordinate. Hence it seems best to understand this qualifying expression as meaning that those who truly love our Lord Jesus Christ do so in those heavenly places of spiritual life and vigour in which corruption is for ever unknown. It is in this sphere, as the Epistle has so wonderfully shown, that peace, and love, and faith, and grace have full and eternal scope. At the same time, all who are familiar with the Apostle's thought know that for him the heavenly life of immortality cannot be treated as being exclusively either metaphysical or physical. Both death and life for the Apostle are charged with spiritual and moral significance. The realm of 'uncorruptness' in the sense of immortality is thus the fitting home and the final destination of those who have first of all received the quickening and exaltation of spiritual

redemption in Christ Jesus. Thus this twofold benediction reaffirms the whole teaching of the Epistle, and is simply a closing prayer that the people of Christ may fully enjoy the illimitable riches that have been set forth in the Epistle as the inheritance of those who are brought to the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus through the fellowship of sonship.

The benediction, therefore, invites us to sum up the teaching of the Epistle as to the ultimate goal to which faith looks forward, and to apprehend what is the spiritual temper that is thereby engendered in believers. In order to this it is necessary briefly to review the outstanding factors which determine the final outlook. These have been so fully dealt with in the foregoing exposition that they need only to be barely indicated.

They are five in number :

1. First of all is the universal lordship of Christ as the Son of the Father. He has ' ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things ' (iv. 10). His exaltation is not due merely to His dignity, divine as it is. Nor is it due to an external act of divine power. It is the consummation of His whole life-history as the divine Son of God and the Redeemer of the world. It has not merely been achieved by His triumphant deed upon the Cross, but wrought out by His vital union with mankind. Hence the lordship of Christ Jesus is not a glorification that separates Him from the universe, but a consummation that gives full effect to His immanence in it.

2. By reason of this the Apostle discerns the solidarity of the whole universe under, in, and unto Christ. The full meaning and effect of this solidarity have not yet been attained. It is of the essence of sin that, in so far as it prevails, this solidarity is injured and its full expression delayed. Yet it is the Father's good pleasure 'to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth' (1. 10). The 'one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves' can only come about because of the Christward potentialities which belong to all things from the start. It is the culminating triumph of the Son, 'through whom and *unto whom* all things have been created' (Col. i. 16).

3. In the next place, there is the supremacy of the filial consciousness. The highest and most characteristic gift of God to men is that of 'the adoption of sons unto Himself.' In this gift is seen the fulfilment of His eternal purpose—at least in earnest. It is a gift of the highest intrinsic worth, and conveys the fullest satisfaction to all who receive it. The testimony to its value given by spiritual experience is that this gift is worthy to be the consummation of God's dealings with mankind. It is a fitting climax to all the preparatory processes of divine grace, both in the providential and redemptive history of mankind, as well as in creation. Yet this gift, so priceless in itself, contains an infinite promise. The knowledge and fellowship of God contained in it have the promise of eternal increase. The possibilities

of filial life are beginning to unfold themselves in powers which give assurance of unlimited development and attainment. The blessedness that springs out of the interpenetration of God and man in the intercourse of holy love is also illimitable. The meaning and the resources of the Divine Fatherhood, on the one hand, and the possibilities of filial life in Him, on the other, are revealed in the Sonship of Christ Jesus, through whom alone all others find access to the life of sonship by adoption. Hence sonship, as containing the revelation of the Fatherhood of God, as responding to it, and as finding blessedness in so doing, is the central fact of human and, therefore, of cosmic history. It has finality in history, since it gathers up into itself all preparatory stages and contains all the potentialities of an inexhaustible future. It makes the creation of the world worth while, giving a reason that illuminates the whole, a fulfilment that justifies all the processes by which it is reached. To restore and consummate this gift is a deed worthy of 'God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.' It is in itself the convincing assurance that the universe does not exist in vain.

4. Moreover, this gift of sonship is of universal promise. The birth and growth of the Catholic Church, the calling and ever-expanding hope of the apostolic ministry, and the ever-widening response made to the message of reconciliation by men of every race, religion, and rank, justify the belief that all men may come to share the illumination of Christ. To say this is in itself to imply

more. For man is so related to the spiritual world above him and to the natural world around him that there is an inner affinity between him and them. They cannot be altogether excluded from the form of man's relationship to the Father in Jesus Christ or from participating according to their degree in the blessedness of that relationship. Hence it follows inevitably that the purpose of God to confer upon men, in Christ, the adoption of sons is associated with the wider purpose 'to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth.'

5. Finally, the life of sonship carries with it the gift of an 'inheritance.' If God comes into His own inheritance in His sons, this means that they also come into their inheritance in Him. Primarily this inheritance consists in the enjoyment of God Himself. But God has now become God in Christ Jesus. He is reached, not by abstraction and negation, but in and through the Incarnation. God must be distinguished, but cannot be separated, from His world. He is above it, not apart from it. Hence this union of transcendence and immanence, apprehended by His children, gives them the assurance that they inherit all things in God, and that all things, when experienced in Him, convey some part of His riches to His children. Limitations, all particular things must needs have; but contradictions to the divine mind and will cannot be permanent. In so far as these exist, they must eventually be transformed by Christ, that God may come into the fullness of His own

inheritance in His world and that men may enter into the fullness of their inheritance in Him. Hence Christ, the exalted Redeemer, can only complete His work by the universal transformation through which God becomes ' all in all.'

From all this it will be seen that the last word of redemption and revelation in Christ is contained in the filial life which is manifested in Him and conferred by Him. This filial life is surely grounded in the very nature of things, because the true nature of things is heavenly and divine. Hence, not only is the life of sonship safe from all possible harm, but it contains within itself the pledge of all possible good for the universe as a whole. The outcome of all things shall be in keeping with their divine origin. The predestined end shall neither disappoint nor fail. No forecast of the future and no estimate of the whole can be entertained, in Christ Jesus, that is unworthy of the exceeding riches of divine grace and glory which have been displayed in Christ, both in the objective sphere of His life-history and in the subjective sphere of full salvation and blessedness experienced in Him.

Yet the manifestation of filial life in Christ and its realization in believers are, above all, the revelation of the Fatherhood of God. In His Fatherhood, as set forth and experienced in Christ Jesus, is to be found the principle that unites the spiritual and the material, and that conveys in and through the present the sure promise of the future. Life in Christ is throughout shaped and inspired by the

sure confidence that holy love is the highest and inmost reality of all things. It is both the centre and the circumference of the universe. Assured of this love, we may look seeming contradictions in the face, and may be sure either that they are not real, or that, if real, they are not caused by God and cannot be abiding in His universe. The assurance that God shall be 'all in all' contains the promise that love shall be triumphant. This means that Christ guarantees the future of the universe as a whole, all the higher values that are attained in its history, and in particular all the personalities in whom these higher values are realized. The glory of God is revealed in the perfection and permanence of His work. His work can only be perfected and be permanent in His sons. Hence the whole realm of spiritual promise and blessedness rests upon the Fatherhood of God. To this extent the Fatherhood and the world it creates are interdependent, for the cause can only attain to its causality in the effect. Yet the effect is determined by the cause; and the source of the whole realm of blessedness described in this Epistle, with its illimitable prospects, is 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The Epistle to the Ephesians opens with the ascription 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ' (i. 3), and ends with the benediction of 'Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (vi. 23). All that lies between is but

an exposition of the wealth of meaning contained in this revelation and experience of God.

Hence the temper that pervades the Epistle is in perfect keeping with the supreme object of faith, and, therefore, with the interpretation of the universe and its prospects which alone is consistent with faith in Him. Boundless hope, sure confidence, the venturous faith that ever reaches out towards higher and larger things, are triumphant. Perfect love has cast out fear. It has done more. It has raised unbounded expectation, and this expectation has called into play the energy that presses forward to its enjoyment.

To the revelation of God in Christ Jesus as the Father corresponds the answer made by faith—'Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen' (iii. 20, 21).

In this revelation and this response is summed up the entire content of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

CHAPTER XIV

EPILOGUE

THIS exposition has been completed in time of war—the most widespread and destructive in the history of the world. Not only has its outbreak brought untold sorrows and dangers to mankind, but it has for the time being shattered the generous hope of quickly establishing by universal consent a peaceful and Christian world-civilization. The whole fabric of international relations has been shaken, and international law has been ruthlessly violated. The dictates of humanity, though protected as far as possible by international conventions, have been flagrantly outraged by the aggressors in this unexampled conflict. And all this has happened just at the time when the whole course of events has brought all the peoples of mankind into such intimate relations that the prospect of establishing fellowship and co-operation on the basis of universal brotherhood had come in sight. In response to the new opportunity the Christian Church in all lands and in all its branches had been receiving a new missionary inspiration, and, therefore, was becoming conscious of a constraining call to catholic intercourse and concerted action.

In presence of this catastrophe it is not surprising that the hearts of Christians should be filled with anguish and their minds with perplexity. Perhaps it is more remarkable that the anguish has not been deeper and the perplexity more widespread and haunting. That Christians have been able to pursue their ordinary tasks and, in addition, to discharge special obligations imposed by the war with so little apparent distress and unsettlement is doubtless due in part to practical self-mastery, and possibly still more to the lack of sufficient imagination to realize the horror of what has taken place. At least equally, however, it may be due to the fact that the implicit reason of the Christian faith gives an immediate and unquestioned assurance that what is taking place is not incompatible with the revelation of God in Christ Jesus, that it cannot affect either the grounds upon which or the form in which it is believed, but that in some respects it even illustrates and confirms the essential truths of the gospel.

Yet if this be true, it needs explicit statement. Moreover, to many this claim will seem, not only open to serious question, but to invite positive contradiction. In particular, what becomes of the Sovereignty of God, set forth in the Epistle to the Ephesians as embracing His universal sway, His gracious purpose towards mankind, and its realization in Christ Jesus ? What becomes, again, of the Kingship of the exalted Christ, of the reconciliation of His Cross, and of the transcendent manifestation therein given of the true life both of God and man ?

How can we trace through all these perplexing events such a growing influence of Christ as may justify the hope that the catholic vision of the Epistle may be fulfilled and that men may yet 'attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' Amid the holocausts of war, what becomes of the unspeakable worth of spiritual values and of the personal lives in which alone these values can be realized? Can we still hold that either the material conditions or the existing constitution of human life are compatible with such a belief? In particular, are the claims of nationality, though rightly held to be sacred, compatible with the catholicity upon which universal and lasting peace must depend? It is clear that if the truth of Christ can withstand such apparent contradictions, nothing else can disprove or overthrow it. If, on the contrary, the very ordeal through which mankind is passing should shed fresh light upon the presuppositions of the Christian faith and give new meaning to them, then, indeed, a new chapter may eventually be added to the great volume of Christian evidences.

To investigate all this is, of course, far beyond the scope of such an exposition as is contained in the foregoing pages. To deal exhaustively with the problems raised is out of the question. If certain essential truths of the Christian faith be firmly grasped, there will be, possibly, no need of such treatment. Yet a few suggestions may perhaps be offered with advantage in order that the

Epistle and the arresting events that are taking place may illuminate one another.

1. How then are we to regard the sovereignty of the all-holy and gracious 'God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' in the face of the terrible facts of human life? To begin with, the sphere in which His sovereignty is, above all, made manifest and exercised is spiritual and transcendent. Undoubtedly His creatorship is involved and His immanence throughout the whole order of things. Yet it is through the reality and power of spiritual relationships that the divine purpose of love toward man and towards the universe will eventually be fulfilled. In these spiritual relationships the sovereignty of God is revealed as consisting in Fatherhood and not in mere makership. That is to say, His sovereignty is not only compatible with freedom, but can only reveal its nature and gain its ends in and through the gift of freedom with all that freedom involves, including constant risks and possible catastrophes. In other words, God's sovereignty can only attain its ends and exhibit its power in the life of His sons. The gift and enjoyment of sonship cannot be mechanically conveyed, but must be conditioned by spiritual laws and processes. The capacity of sonship in men must be assumed; but its realization is for the present partial and imperfect. If the sovereignty of God is to come by its own, this can only be by such uplifting and transformation of men as shall make them completely responsive to God, worthy instruments and partners of His mind and will. In enforcing this truth, both the

teaching of the Epistle and the lessons learnt by reflection upon life are in complete accord. Yet the very fact that the capacity of sonship has been vouchsafed to men and that the Son of God has appeared in triumphant grace and power to fulfil it justifies the confident hope that the sovereignty of the All-holy and All-loving will eventually prevail, not in spite of human freedom, but in and through it. Indeed, so true is it that human nature has been constituted with a view to divine sonship that the whole structure of human life, both individual and collective, rests upon this filial capacity and would be dissolved if that capacity were utterly destroyed. Life and sonship are so essentially one that each is the measure of the other. Surely this is the ultimate reason which accounts for the assurance, not only of St. Paul, but of the Old Testament Prophets who lived in the midst of a welter of unrighteousness and cruelty, that the interests of the highest are safe, that evil will be out-generalled by the Divine initiative, and that out of the twofold action of judgement and salvation the Kingdom of God will eventually be fully and finally revealed. If the spiritual significance of all this be grasped, the reality of the Divine Sovereignty may be accepted as the supreme fact of life, although the existence of contradictions to it may be frankly admitted. Notwithstanding this admission, the sure confidence may remain that these contradictions will eventually be overborne, and that in the meanwhile they may be brought into such subordination to the outworking of the divine purpose as Isaiah

was enabled to discern even in the case of the hideous terror of Assyrian ruthlessness and tyranny.

2. But what of Christ, of His atoning work and of His spiritual lordship ? So far as His influence is concerned, the events that are taking place seem to afford a fresh illustration of its range and power. Even the problems and perplexities by which many minds are weighed down at the present time have been created by the growing acceptance of standards of which Christ is the authoritative and inspiring source. In order that evil may be felt to be a problem, two things are required. First of all, condemnation and dissatisfaction ; and in the second place, a sense that the evil condemned is remediable. In the case of the present war and of the antagonisms that have led up to it both these conditions are present. Yet their very existence is of recent growth. They have been brought into being largely by the conviction that war is contrary to the mind of Christ and that Christian influence is or ought to be strong enough to render it impossible. In the case of those whose dissatisfaction arises simply from the growing humanity of modern times, it is clear that the rise of this very humanity cannot be explained without rendering full tribute to the influence of Christ. Hence war, which up to recent times has been treated as not only inevitable on occasion but even desirable, is now treated as one of the remediable evils of human life. For this reason the philosophy which has supplied both an incentive to German militarism and a justification of it has frankly declared itself to be anti-Christian. The influence

of Christ is further illustrated both by the efforts to reduce the inhumanity of warfare, and by the determined, though hopeless, endeavour to furnish plausible pretexts for inhumanity where ruthlessness prevails.

Passing, however, from this more superficial element of the case, it may be confidently affirmed that the crisis through which the world is passing brings to light a structure of human society which supplies fresh and almost startling evidence that so far from the Apostle's teaching being artificial, it presents a transcendent and typical realization of great truths and forces which are essential to the life of mankind. To begin with, the fact of human solidarity is being brought home to us as never before. The texture of human life is so closely interwoven that it is clearly impossible to treat the individual apart from the collective society to which he belongs. Each man, however eminent or obscure, is in such wise part of a living organism that it is hard to say where his own personal responsibility begins or ends. He both gives and responds to innumerable influences by which the thought, the feeling, and the action of the community are being shaped. No individual entering into the world can stand apart from its community of life. New light is shed upon St. Paul's declaration that ' as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.' Hence also the plain and poignant fact of vicarious suffering as the result of crimes for which the sufferers are

not to blame and of corporate association and sympathy with deeds in which they themselves can take no active share. And what is more important, human solidarity and vicarious suffering may be made the means of an active self-sacrifice by which the suffering is transformed into a decisive deed; an act of mighty influence for the transformation of human life. The heroism of Belgium is a case in point. Before the occasion arose few would have imagined that this prosperous and apparently materialist people would prove capable of giving one of the sublimest testimonies in all history that there are purely ideal interests so precious that in their behalf the sacrifice, not only of individual life, but even of national existence, may be worth while. Such a testimony can only be given in and through the suffering which attests it. And such suffering has in a measure redemptive significance.

Once more, we have witnessed the almost unlimited power of representative personalities to assume an attitude and to perform deeds which create, express, and solidify the temper of whole peoples, so that they take up a new position in the world. All this is most real and has become quite obvious during the recent months. It is all on a lower plane than that of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and has regard to interests that pass with most men as being altogether secular. Yet in this lower and more external realm such mighty spiritual forces are at work, and in them such relationships stand revealed. Does not all this show that when St. Paul, in the light of his knowledge of Christ, sets

before us a supreme Representative of the race, who redeems it from sin by entering into its life, suffering its penalty, and transforming that penalty into a supreme act of sacrifice through which totally new relations to God become possible, he is presenting to us a transcendent and universal example of what is revealed in lower and broken ways in the outstanding facts of human history? Do not Christ and life, in proportion as life reaches towards the ideal, illuminate one another? Does not life supply what may be called the raw material out of which the very atonement of Christ is divinely wrought? Or, to put the matter from the other side, is not the fact that all these principles and influences find play in human life and are essential to it a sign that all things have been so made through Christ and unto Him—that they are so constituted in Him—that His position and work are the key to the whole scheme and order of human life?

3. Yet if all this is suggestive of Christ, not less is the need of His redemptive and quickening work brought home to us through all that is taking place. Under the stimulus of a great call human nature is seen on occasion to rise to a sublime height of unselfishness and devotion, the possibility of which in many cases had never been suspected. Such devotion sounds depths in the universal heart of man, and does this powerfully in exact proportion to its approach to what is truly Christlike in spirit and conduct. If only human nature, we cry, could always live at this high level; if the best were but

habitual and universal! Yet even in the noblest it is weakened and contaminated by an evil which is ever present with the good. Surely if Christ be foreshadowed and suggested by the best that takes place in human life, equally does the heart cry out for such a quickening through Christ as St. Paul describes, for the entrance through Christ into such relationships to God as shall call the best into full and permanent activity while destroying the worst.

4. Not less vividly is there revealed both the need and the promise of a truly catholic community empowered to set forth this highest life and thus eventually to transform the world by its influence and power. Great as has been the failure of the Catholic Church, both as a whole and in all its branches, the need for the fulfilment of the catholic ideal is being clearly displayed. May we not believe that the earnest of this fulfilment is already being given? When such catholicity is fully realized it will stand for the suppression of all egoism in every sphere of human life. It will not suppress nationality, but will 'clothe it upon' with humanity. Just as in the Epistle to the Ephesians the Church is seen both to transcend and to recreate the family, so we may hope that it will eventually destroy all that is sordid and divisive in nationality and bring mankind as a whole to the apprehension and enjoyment of collective good.

5. Furthermore, does the war, with its unprecedented destruction of human life, really tend to destroy our belief that the spiritual values repre-

sented in men have highest significance and are a guarantee of the immortality which the Apostle sets before us ? On the contrary, nothing could more effectually shatter the materialist calculus of pleasure and pain than what is taking place at the present time. The unsuspected possibilities of human nature are being displayed with new vividness and force. In them is revealed as nowhere else the real nature of things, the true ends in which human life reaches its attainment. They contain the revelation of a higher order than the material, and bring fresh strength to every argument and every dictate of human nature that postulate immortality for those in whom this higher order manifests itself and that justify the belief that the universe exists for ideal and eternal ends.

All this is but a bare indication of what might be said and fails even to mention many relevant issues that might be raised. Yet perhaps sufficient has been said to show that the momentous yet dread events that are taking place, instead of forcing us to close the Epistle to the Ephesians with a sigh of despair in the belief that it is too good to be true, should send us afresh to the revelation it contains, as illustrating the most vital facts of life, offering the only way of salvation from its outstanding evil, and the eternal fulfilment of all that of which the highest and best contains the promise. The revelation that is given in and through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus may well appear to us as containing the highest reason and the divinest power. Alike the achievement to which human nature has

attained, the evil by which it is afflicted, and its reaching out to a higher and larger life bear witness to the abiding purpose of God ' to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth.' ' Amen ; come, Lord Jesus ! '

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